

**THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL PROCESS FOR THE COMMUNITY OF
DEMOCRACIES, SANTIAGO 2005: PROMOTING REGIONAL DIALOGUES
AMONG GOVERNMENTS AND CIVIL SOCIETY**

Durban, South Africa, February 4th, 2004

Organizers:

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In the workshop, the Executive Secretariat and regional representatives presented a brief overview of the Community of Democracies (CD), discussing challenges for the non-governmental process and inviting those attending the workshop to join the process. The main issues examined were: the governmental process of Community of Democracies; the non-governmental CD process and its challenges for the Santiago 2005 Ministerial meeting.

The governmental process of the Community of Democracies

The first meeting of the Community of Democracies was held in Warsaw, Poland, in 2000 and it was convened by a group of 7 countries, known as the Convening Group that has at the moment 10 members: Chile, India, Poland, the Czech Republic, the United States of America, Mali, Mexico, Portugal, South Africa and South Korea. More than 100 States have participated in this event, mostly at Foreign Ministers level. The meeting resulted in adoption of the Warsaw Declaration which sets forth a set of democratic principles, and a joint commitment to promote democracy at home and abroad. The second governmental meeting was held in Seoul, South Korea in 2002, where governments agreed on a Plan of Action.

At the workshop, it was noted both that the Community of Democracies is a very good initiative in the present world context, and that there is a need to "de-americanize" it, to strengthen the idea that it is truly a community of nations working on democracy worldwide. In this sense, it was also stated that it is necessary to have more involvement of European governments in the process.

In the process between Warsaw and Seoul, the Convening Group created a new category: observer countries. Many states that participated in Warsaw were not invited as full members but as observers in Seoul, due to setbacks in their democratic processes. The need to review those criteria the Convening Group is utilizing for inviting countries to the meetings was raised.

Several other ideas were underlined:

- The Community of Democracies is in its earlier stages, and the Santiago 2005 meeting needs to provide some concrete achievements to be successful.
- The need to make the governmental process, especially the Convening Group, more democratic and transparent.
- The importance of linking this process with other international efforts to democratize global governance, such as the Democracy Caucus at the U.N, reform of the International Monetary Fund, and others.
- Civil society organizations should make recommendations regarding the governmental process itself.
- The Commonwealth mechanisms were suggested as a potential model for the Community of Democracies.

The non-governmental CD process

At the Warsaw meeting, a civil society counterpart held a parallel meeting, in the first effort to include non-governmental actors. At Seoul a separate non-governmental meeting was organized which convened more than 250 people from 75 countries. As a result, a civil society declaration for the strengthening of democracy was released.

The Community of Democracies was recognized as a window of opportunity for civil society organizations to address some of the main democratic issues in their countries and at the regional and global levels. With this aim, an Executive Secretariat is leading the non-governmental process for Santiago 2005. This Secretariat -hosted in a Chilean NGO- is a temporary coordinator, which tries to coordinate work towards advancing feasible objectives, and that is ready to pass the baton of the Secretariat -along with a systematization of the process and lessons learned- to the next chair country. This Secretariat is trying to address the challenges of:

- Establish a non-governmental counterpart to the Community of Democracies composed of different social and political actors and broadening the scope of actors involved.
- Giving continuity to the process from Seoul to Santiago and to the subsequent meeting of the Community of Democracies, making this a sustainable process.
- Disseminate information about the Community of Democracies to diverse sectors.

It was highlighted that the main goal for the Secretariat is to organize a regional-based process, where the regions can discuss democratic deficits and make proposals and recommendations to the governments that will gather in Santiago.

As a follow-up to the coordination meeting that took place in Lisbon in January 19-21, 2004 with regional actors, representatives of the European, African, and Middle Eastern regions at the workshop presented the main results of the Lisbon meeting. In this presentation, the three regions proposed a set of democratic deficits as main issues to be addressed.

At the same time, participants in the workshop learned about the activities that the participants in Lisbon agreed to undertake during 2004. More information regarding regional activities can be found in www.santiago2005.org

Challenges of the non- governmental process for the Santiago 2005 Ministerial Meeting

The issue of the independence of civil society organizations was raised. It was highlighted that the governmental-oriented strategy of this process should be maintained. Putting pressure on the governments was seen both as a necessity and efficient manner to work, albeit ensuring the necessary independence from governments.

The need to not duplicate efforts with other movements like the World Movement for Democracy was also raised, while others noted that the two processes are distinct but complementary and should work in coordination.

The need for a better coordination among civil society organizations, to avoid problems faced at the Warsaw and Seoul meetings was underlined.

A focus on improving the CD process (greater transparency, implementation of Seoul Plan of Action, more involvement of civil society) was discussed, as well as a focus on such international issues as reform of the United Nations and the IMF.

It was proposed to include parliamentarians, as another potential stakeholder for the both the governmental and non-governmental process.

Regarding funding, it was commented that the European Parliament has approved a budget guidance that encourages the European Commission to direct resources for the Community of Democracies process.