



GLOBAL ISSUES GROUP: ITS ROLE AND PROPOSALS

July 20th, 2004

BACKGROUND

Considering that the objective of the strategy of the non-governmental process of the Community of Democracies in the year leading up to the Ministerial meeting in Santiago 2005 is to generate proposals to governments for their consideration, and taking into account the concerns raised by different groups and individuals on these matters, the Executive Secretariat has organized a global issues group, with the objective of making the proposals that directly address the CD governmental process to the Convening Group.

The group aims to bring before the Convening group the following:

- a) Criteria for participation in CD including advice as to which governments should be invited to Santiago 2005 Ministerial Conference as either "participants" or "observers."
- b) Democratization of the Convening Group (e.g., rotating membership, advisory participation, transparency of decision-making, etc.)
- c) Formalization of a process for participation by civil society representatives in the CD process with specific attention to participation in the Convening Group and Ministerial meetings.

THE GROUP

The group is being coordinated by the Executive Secretariat, and its members are:

Democracy Coalition Project
Council for a Community of Democracies
Westminster Foundation for Democracy
Institute of Multi-Party Democracy
Executive Secretariat for the non-governmental CD process

Freedom House, International IDEA, the World Movement for Democracy and others have had special participation in the discussions of the group.

PROPOSALS

An edited version of three initial proposals, revised through consultation among Global Issues Group members and all non-governmental actors worldwide involved in the process is presented here for your consideration. That consultation took place between June 9-22, 2004.

The review has been made based on the document "Criteria for Participation and Procedures", approved in Seoul, available at: www.santiago2005.org.

I. CRITERIA FOR THE INVITATION PROCESS

1. When deciding which states to invite to the Biennial Ministerial Meetings as participants or observers, we recommend the Convening Group review the democratic performance of every state, even if invited to the past Biennial Conference, to verify its compliance with the "essential elements of democracy".

In the Seoul Conference, all participating states endorsed a Plan of Action which states: "In accordance with the principles articulated in the Warsaw Declaration, the Community of Democracies, through as wide consultations as possible with its participants, will not include those countries where there is currently a disruption of constitutional rule or severe persistent erosion of or lack of essential elements of democracy."

It is critical that the Convening Group, in specifying the criteria for invitations to the Santiago Ministerial meeting, stress that the "essential elements of democracy" include respect for human rights and basic freedoms; holding of free, fair and periodic multi-party elections; guarantees to everyone to exercise his or her right to take part in the government directly or indirectly, according to the rule of law; separation of powers, and independence of the branches of the government, and equality of every citizen before the law. In addition, we suggest the Convening Group to continue relying on the "Criteria for Participation and Procedures" document used for inviting governments to Seoul.

2. In deciding invitations, we propose the Convening Group draw upon and state publicly its use of certain well-respected indexes, studies, measurements and other evaluations that have been carried out by international organizations like the World Bank, Freedom House, Transparency International, Bertelsmann Foundation, Polity Index, Human Rights Watch, Center for Public Integrity, and others and to publicize them.

Transparency regarding the use of those documents will allow governmental and non-governmental actors involved in this process to understand what

criteria are being employed by the Convening Group to measure democratic performance. This will enable civil society organizations in different countries to focus on specific areas in need of improvement.

The IDEA State of Democracy Assessment Methodology or another similar methodological frame could be used to facilitate this process.

It is proposed that the non-governmental side of the Community of Democracies, and its next Executive Secretariat, based on these documents and criteria for decision, can also participate with proposals on which countries should be invited and in which category. To do so effectively, the Convening Group should inform the nongovernmental secretariat of its timetable for issuing invitations to the Santiago ministerial.

3. The Convening Group should continue its practice of having two categories for invitation to the ministerial – full participants and observers. States which do not meet the criteria set forth above, but which have demonstrated concrete progress toward reaching them could be invited as observers. Observers may not participate in the negotiation of conference documents or other decisions of the Community of Democracies, but may declare their adherence to them once adopted by participating states. In addition, the Convening Group should invite inter-governmental organizations to play an active role in the ministerial deliberations (United Nations Secretariat, UNDP, World Bank, OAS, Commonwealth, EU, International IDEA, Council of Europe, OSCE, NATO, African Union, Arab League, ASEAN, etc.)

An appreciation of these suggestions will make participation by civil society and the next CD Executive Secretariat in the invitation process more effective in the future.

II. DEMOCRATIC ACTION

1. We propose that governments participating in the Community of Democracies to provide resources and other diplomatic and political support to foster democratic civil society organizations in those countries where the Convening Group has verified partial fulfilment of democratic criteria, with the aim of exerting more pressure on governments to improve their democratic performance and thereby qualify for CD participation.

In those countries where such criteria have not been fulfilled, we suggest the CD should encourage steps toward development of the "essential elements of democracy" within these societies. These governments should be apprised of the advantages of association with the Community of Democracies, and of the support by the Community of Democracies of the right of the citizens in non-

democratic societies to democratic governance. We recommend the CD to support democracy activists in such countries by stating that the democratic principles enunciated in the Warsaw Declaration are universal and apply to countries where democracy is threatened or does not exist, as well as to countries in transition to democracy. The democratic community represented in the Community of Democracies, a majority of the world's nations, should proclaim the right of all peoples in all countries to full participation in shaping their own destiny.

2. We propose that the Convening Group, with the assistance of the Executive Secretariat of the non-governmental process, to consult with civil society groups in the "grey" or borderline states to get their views on whether it would help or hurt democratization in their country if their government were invited to Santiago.

The Executive Secretariat can solicit input from the regional coordinators and their networks to ensure adequate information and participation in the invitation process.

III. PROCEDURES

1. We propose the Convening Group to invite the Executive Secretariat of the non-governmental process for the Community of Democracies and other members of the Global Issues Group and the Regional Coordinators to formally take part in the meetings of the Convening Group, as a means to incorporate civil society actors in the CD process. In addition, we recommend the Convening Group to agree on incorporating civil society actors in the Ministerial meeting itself.

This also implies consultation with civil society organizations involved in the CD process as to the wisdom of disinviting or inviting de novo, governments within their purview, as either "participants" or "observers."

2. It is proposed that the Convening Group assesses its present membership and prospect for expanding it.

We suggest this discussion to be open to civil society organizations working on the Community of Democracies, and we suggest it to include means of endowing the Convening Group with greater legitimacy, transparency and financial support.