

**Statement by the International Steering Committee of the Non-governmental
Process of the Community of Democracies**
September 20, 2006

I have the privilege to speak on behalf of the International Steering Committee, of which some members are present. In the documentation before you is a full list of members.

I have been asked to thank you for the high level of participation of non-governmental representatives in the Santiago meeting. On the basis of this collaboration, we have already begun preparations for the 2007 Ministerium in Bamako.

Having established the International Steering Committee with representatives from all regions, an Executive Secretariat was set up in Bamako under the presidency of Dr Oumar Makalou. The first of a series of regional preparatory meetings was held for Africa in Bamako, the report of which is available, and others will follow in the Americas, Asia, Europe and the Middle East.

Following the invitation of the Chair of the Community of Democracies, we have identified representatives for the four Working Groups whom we believe will contribute to their role in implementing the Santiago commitments and widening support for the Community. Those individuals and a liaison person in respect of each Working Group are in a document before you.

Since Santiago, the Community has played a significant role in two important matters which we would like to highlight.

The United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) is set to make important global contributions to support actions for strengthening democracy. We would urge you to affirm and seek to replenish the Fund so that its work can continue.

Second, the election of the Human Rights Council has resulted in a council in which members of the Community are significantly represented. We would like to draw your attention to a statement issued on September 11 titled "*Democracy Caucus Urged To Lead Efforts To Strengthen UN Actions On Democracy And Human Rights*" by a number of civil society organizations and representatives which has been circulated. The statement focuses on the Human Rights Council, freedom of association and the "assault on democracy" resolution, and the United Nations Democracy Fund.

The International Steering Committee would itself like to request the Community members in Geneva to convene under the leadership of Mali in order to consider ways in which the Council can address human rights violations in an even handed and pro-active way. We are convinced that country and situation specific violations should continue to receive attention through resolutions and other available mechanisms.

We would urge you to ensure that the Council considers acting on human rights violations in Sudan/Darfur, North Korea, Uzbekistan and other circumstances. The present coup in

Thailand provides a unique opportunity for the Community itself to take leadership by visiting the country to ascertain the facts and encourage a rapid restoration of democracy.

In Warsaw the Community resolved to strengthen cooperation to face, amongst others, the challenge of terrorism in accordance with "respect for human rights and for the norms of international law." We would encourage members to use their seats on the council to consider the impact of terrorism and anti-terrorism on human rights.

Lastly in relation to the Human Rights Council, may we associate ourselves with the statement of September 11 in welcoming the Universal Periodic Review and urge you to encourage review by independent experts and to establish appropriate mechanisms for the participation of non-governmental organizations.

As we said at the beginning of our statement, we believe the collaboration between the Governmental and Nongovernmental Processes of the Community of Democracies has been growing over the life of the Community, from Warsaw, through Seoul, to Santiago. We believe that Bamako 2007 will be an important milestone in this journey especially with its important theme addressing poverty, development and democracy and intend to work to this end together with you.

We support the planned establishment of a permanent secretariat for the Community and look forward to interaction with yourselves during its establishment.

Because of the momentum which has been created for the Community, we would urge you to adopt the resolution on "*The assault on democracy assistance*" today. It was submitted to the convening group in May of this year. We are extremely concerned at the new restrictions which are continuing to be placed on civil society organizations in a growing number of countries and on their ability, therefore, to "strengthen democratic governance" – to use the words of the Santiago commitment "Cooperating for Democracy".

If it was true in Warsaw in June 2000 that the Community will "co-operate to consolidate and strengthen democratic institutions" affirming its "determination to work together to promote and strengthen democracy" it is even more important now. The concerted will of a multi-lateral community of democracies to "promote and strengthen democracy domestically, regionally and globally" will be undermined by efforts to suppress the work of non-governmental organizations in countries which are members of the Community.

We look forward to Bamako 2007 and its preparatory processes and assure you of our intention and willingness to participate fully in these processes and the Ministerium itself.