

Promoting Democracy Multilaterally: What can Civil Society do through the United Nations, International Financial Institutions and the Community of Democracies?

The workshop focused on the efforts by civil society to influence governments to pursue policies that favor democratic developments at the national, regional and global levels. Given the rapid advance of globalization and the spread of democratic governments, it was recognized that global institutions must adapt to this new reality by accommodating the demands of civil society. However, there remains a wide gap between the power of global institutions and the capacity of civil society to influence them.

1. **The UN Democracy Caucus:** The UN Democracy Caucus should seek to establish a permanent group of democracies at the UN, as a way of overcoming democratic deficits within the organization and for promoting human rights and democracy in a more effective way

Main Questions & Debate

- Participation in the democracy caucus, mechanisms for decision, etc.
- Civil society's role in putting together proposals and demanding what they want this caucus to become.
- Importance of implementing criteria for state participation.
- Understanding that it is in the state's self interest to promote democracy, internally and in the international fora.

2. **The IMF:** There was a discussion of the problems of democratic deficits, the lack of public debate on its procedures, and the lack of transparency within the IMF. Club of Madrid's initiative has identified similar problems.

Main Questions & Debate

- Country-cases where the IMF's policies had a negative impact.
- How the IMF should address countries in its individual context and link assistance to democracy.
- Civil society should have a role in this process.

3. **The Community of Democracies (CD):** In Warsaw in June 2000, the first meeting of the Community of Democracies (CD) was held to launch a new partnership of democratic governments with the aim of promoting cooperation on democracy promotion both internally and outside their borders. The governmental process is monitored by a non-governmental process that is attempting to forward civil society's inputs into its decisions. The next CD meeting will take place in Santiago, Chile, and the process is being developed by the Chilean Executive Secretariat.

Main Questions & Debate

- Several cases were discussed, especially Zimbabwe, which participants considered to be an illustration of a case which called for greater pressure from external actors.
- Importance of NGOs developing strategies at different levels (national, regional and global) and of investing in networking.
- The CD countries should identify a "democracy officer" in each of their countries.
- Governments should develop good mechanisms to allow NGOs to play an active role, including in decisions regarding who should be invited to the next CD ministerial in Santiago.
- There should be more concrete support to NGOs – especially in areas with less tradition of democracy activism (e.g. training, leadership programs, etc.).
- Development assistance should be linked to progress in democracy developments.
- External aid should be channeled to non-democratic regimes through civil society actors.
- The CD should become more transparent and open to civil society participation.