

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

TOPIC: COMMUNITY OF DEMOCRACIES

1. What is the Community of Democracies?

The Community of Democracies (CD) is an informal association of states dedicated to promoting and strengthening democracy at home and abroad. In June 2000, foreign ministers and other senior officials from over 100 governments gathered in Warsaw, Poland for the first Community of Democracies ministerial conference. At the meeting, governments representing every major region, religion, cultural tradition, and level of development endorsed the Warsaw Declaration. This document commits governments to uphold a comprehensive set of democratic principles and practices, and to work together to strengthen democracy in countries that have chosen this path. The Community of Democracies starts from the premise that there are no ideal democracies and that emerging and established democratic societies should cooperate to defend and strengthen one another. A second ministerial meeting of the Community of Democracies will be held in Seoul, Republic of Korea, November 10-12, 2002. The formal title of this conference is “Democracy: Investing for Peace and Prosperity”; more information can be found at <http://www.cd2002.go.kr/>

2. What is the Warsaw Declaration?

The Warsaw Declaration is a political commitment by 110 governments to adhere to a comprehensive set of democratic principles and practices and to work cooperatively to strengthen democracy on the global, regional and national levels. The document sets forth a common definition of the elements of democracy based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other norms of international law and practice. It was negotiated among representatives of the endorsing governments and has been translated into six languages. The Warsaw Declaration breaks new ground by committing states to consult with civil society, conduct multiparty elections monitored by independent organizations, permit independent media, and cooperate with one another to promote democracy beyond their borders. (See <http://www.demcoalition.org/html/resou.html#warsaw>)

3. What role does civil society play in the Community of Democracies process?

Parallel to the first meeting in Warsaw, a non-governmental conference organized by the Stefan Batory Foundation (Poland) and Freedom House (USA) brought together leading democracy thinkers and practitioners from civil society from around the world. This conference, the World Forum on Democracy, was held concurrent to the ministerial meeting in order to permit both formal and informal interaction between participants at the two gatherings. A second non-governmental forum will be held in Seoul on November 10-12, 2002, hosted by an international committee of Korean and other civil society organizations. More information can be found at: <http://www.cdngf2002.org/>

4. Who convenes the Ministerial Conferences?

The Governments of the Czech Republic, Chile, India, the Republic of Korea, Mali, Poland and the United States served as the Convening Group for the Warsaw meeting. They decided which governments should be invited to the meeting, the content of the agenda, and similar matters on a consensual basis. The Community of Democracies is now led by ten governments -- the original seven members of the Convening Group plus Portugal, South Africa and Mexico, which were invited by the members of the Convening Group to join the process during and after the Warsaw conference. While the government of the Republic of Korea is hosting the Second Ministerial in Seoul, all ten Convening Group members have contributed to the planning of the meeting.

5. How were these countries selected?

Initially, Poland and the United States contacted governments from established and newer democracies from different parts of the world whose own experience led them to make democracy promotion abroad a priority of their foreign policy. The newest members – South Africa, Mexico and Portugal – were invited as a matter of consensus among the original seven members of the group.

6. How does the Convening Group work?

The ten members of the Convening Group function as an executive or steering committee. The Republic of Korea, host of the next ministerial conference, serves as the current Chair. Poland served as Chair during the first meeting in Warsaw, and Chile will Chair the meeting scheduled to take place in Santiago in 2004. The Convening Group meets regularly at a senior official level, coordinates communications with other governments, organizes the ministerial conference, determines invitations, and issues policy statements and press releases. It is working on preparing an agenda and a plan of action to be considered at the Seoul ministerial.

7. What activities have taken place since Warsaw?

Since the Warsaw meeting in June 2000, a number of activities have taken place:

- The Convening Group helped form an ad hoc democracy caucus at the United Nations, which provided pivotal backing for the UN General Assembly's adoption of a Romanian

resolution on promoting and consolidating democracy in October 2000. Under Polish leadership, the caucus has tried to mobilize support for the Secretary General's report on democracy promotion and explored other ways to advance a democracy agenda at the UN.

- In cooperation with the UN Development Program, the Convening Group has initiated discussions on improving democracy assistance coordination, including by bringing together donors (bilateral and multilateral), recipient governments and civil society actors. An initial planning meeting with representatives from all Convening Group countries and selected NGOs was held in the spring of 2001. The Seoul non-governmental conference and the ministerial meeting will continue these discussions at panels with representatives from donor and recipient countries.
- The Convening Group sponsored a conference hosted by the Organization of American States in February 2001 on the role of regional and global organizations in defending and promoting democracy. Senior representatives from 16 international organizations attended. The two-day meeting provided an opportunity for cross-regional sharing of best practices and lessons learned. OSCE has expressed interest in hosting the next conference and preliminary discussions have begun. For more information, see http://www.demcoalition.org/pdf/oas_report.pdf
- In response to a recommendation of the Warsaw ministerial meeting, the Council on Foreign Relations has convened a panel of experts on responding to threats to democracy. The international task force, composed of former foreign ministers and other prominent figures, will present its findings and recommendations at the Seoul conference. For more information, see http://www.cfr.org/public/democracy/Threats_Concept.html

8. What is the status of the preparations for the Ministerial meeting in Seoul?

The Convening Group governments meet on a regular basis to discuss preparations for the Seoul ministerial and have been consulting civil society on an ad hoc basis. On May 25, 2002 the Convening Group issued a joint press release announcing that the Seoul Ministerial Conference will be held November 10-12, 2002 under the theme "Democracy: Investing for Peace and Prosperity." There will be four ministerial roundtables: 1) Consolidating Democratic Institutions, 2) Regional Cooperation to Promote Democracy, 3) Media and Democracy, and 4) Coordinating Democracy Assistance. For more information, see http://www.demcoalition.org/pdf/comm_of_dem.pdf. Also see the official Korean Government website for the Second Ministerial Conference, <http://www.cd2002.go.kr/>

9. What are the criteria for being invited to the Ministerial meeting in Seoul?

The Convening group governments established by consensus a list of participants based on states' adherence to the standards set forth in the Warsaw Declaration. For the Seoul meeting, the Convening Group created a new category of "observer" governments. In almost all cases these are countries where progress toward democracy has slowed or even been reversed. Most of these countries were present in Warsaw.

10. Which governments have been invited to the Seoul Conference?

| | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------|--------------------|------------------------------|
| Albania* | Ecuador* | Mali* | Russian Federation* |
| Andorra* | El Salvador* | Malta* | Saint Kitts & Nevis* |
| Antigua & Barbuda | Estonia | Marshall Islands* | Saint Lucia |
| Argentina* | Finland* | Mauritius* | Samoa* |
| Australia* | France* | Mexico* | San Marino |
| Austria* | Germany* | Micronesia | Sao Tome & Principe |
| Bahamas* | Ghana* | Monaco | Senegal* |
| Bahrain* | Greece* | Moldova | Seychelles* |
| Bangladesh* | Grenada* | Mongolia* | Slovakia* |
| Barbados | Guatemala* | Morocco* | Slovenia* |
| Belgium* | Guyana | Mozambique* | South Africa* |
| Belize | Honduras* | Namibia | Spain* |
| Benin* | Hungary* | Nauru | Sri Lanka* |
| Bolivia* | Iceland* | Nepal* | St. Vincent & the Grenadines |
| Bosnia & Herzegovina* | India* | Netherlands* | Suriname* |
| Botswana* | Indonesia* | New Zealand* | Sweden* |
| Brazil | Ireland* | Nicaragua* | Switzerland* |
| Bulgaria* | Israel* | Niger* | Tanzania* |
| Canada* | Italy* | Nigeria* | Thailand* |
| Cape Verde* | Jamaica | Norway* | Trinidad & Tobago |
| Chile* | Japan* | Palau* | Turkey* |
| Colombia* | Jordan* | Panama* | Tuvalu* |
| Costa Rica* | Kiribati* | Papua New Guinea | United Kingdom* |
| Croatia* | Latvia | Paraguay* | United States of America* |
| Cyprus* | Lesotho* | Peru* | Uruguay* |
| Czech Republic* | Liechtenstein | Philippines* | Vanuatu |
| Denmark* | Lithuania* | Poland* | Venezuela* |
| Dominica | Luxembourg* | Portugal* | Yugoslavia* |
| Dominican Republic* | Macedonia* | Republic of Korea* | |
| East Timor* | Malawi | Romania* | |

**Indicates confirmed participation at the Seoul Ministerial Conference (as of 30 October 2002)*

The following have been invited as observers or guests:

Observers

Afghanistan*
Algeria*
Armenia*
Azerbaijan
Burkina Faso
Cote d'Ivoire
Egypt
Fiji
Georgia*
Haiti
Kuwait

Lebanon
Madagascar
Malaysia
Oman
Qatar*
Sierra Leone
Singapore
Tunisia
Ukraine*
Yemen

Guests

African Union
Council of Europe*
European Union*
Holy See*
Organization of American States*
Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe*

**Indicates confirmed participation at the Seoul Ministerial Conference (as of 30 October 2002)*

11. Who is organizing the parallel non-governmental forum for Seoul?

A host committee of Korean nongovernmental groups, coordinated by the Sejong Institute, is taking the lead in organizing a meeting for some 250 democracy advocates and experts from around the world. An international planning committee composed of a leading NGO from each of the ten Convening Group countries is assisting the Sejong Institute. Forum participants will meet in regional as well as topical sessions, and are expected to produce concrete action plans. Special effort is being made to include individuals from countries not invited to the ministerial meeting and to schedule formal interaction between Forum and ministerial participants through such events as a joint plenary session and exchange of ideas between experts and senior officials at the ministerial roundtables. For more information, visit <http://www.cdngf2002.org>

International Planning Committee for Seoul Forum:

Chile: Participa (Andrea Sanhueza) <http://www.participa.cl/>
Czech Republic: People in Need Foundation (Tomas Pojar) <http://www.pinf.cz/>
India: Institute of Social Sciences (Ash Narain Roy) <http://www.insocs.org>
Korea: **Sejong Institute (Sook Jong Lee)** <http://www.sejong.org/englishsejong/>
Mali: Groupe de Recherche-Actions Pour le Développement (GRAD) (Idrissa Maiga) grad.mali@malinet.ml
Mexico: Alianza Civica (Silvia Alonso) <http://www.laneta.apc.org/alianza/>
Poland: Stefan Batory Foundation (Alex Smolar) <http://www.batory.org.pl/>
Portugal: Institute of Political Studies, Portuguese Catholic University (Paulo de Almeida Sande)
South Africa: Institute for Multi-Party Democracy (Ntombfuthi Masinga) <http://www.impd.org.za/>
United States: US NGO Planning Committee, composed of The Democracy Coalition Project (<http://www.demcoalition.org/>), National Endowment for Democracy (<http://www.ned.org/>), Freedom House (<http://www.freedomhouse.org>) and Council for a Community of Democracies (<http://www.ccd21.org/>).

12. What is the relationship between the Democracy Coalition Project and the Community of Democracies?

The Community of Democracies meeting in Warsaw in June 2000, the first ever gathering of governments committed to the democratic path, was the inspiration for the Democracy Coalition Project. DCP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization, independent and autonomous from any government. It seeks to expand the influence of democratic forces on regional and global policy decisions by working with national and international civil society coalitions to promote democratic reform at home and abroad. It is a member of the International Planning Committee for the Nongovernmental Forum in Seoul. For more information, see <http://www.demcoalition.org>

13. What will happen after the meeting in Seoul?

The Convening Group has tentatively endorsed a third conference to take place in Santiago, Chile sometime in 2004. In addition, governments are working on a plan of action that would include a number of activities in between the Seoul and Santiago events.

14. How does the Community of Democracies relate to the United Nations?

At the inaugural meeting in Warsaw, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan gave a speech welcoming the initiative and said it “represents my own most profound aspiration for the United Nations as a whole. When the United Nations can truly call itself a community of democracies, the Charter’s noble ideals of protecting human rights and promoting ‘social progress in larger freedoms’ will have been brought much closer.” A growing number of member states at the UN are electoral democracies in some form and are interested in integrating democracy promotion into the organization’s activities, for example at the UN Development Program. Many of these states have formed an ad hoc “democracy caucus” at the UN and were instrumental in rallying support for an UN General Assembly resolution on promoting and consolidating democracy, approved in October, 2000. The Community of Democracies is not an organization with a competing mandate but rather an informal association of like-minded states cooperating to promote democracy as an essential component of securing international peace and stability.