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DEMOCRACY CLUB MUST LIMIT ITS MEMBERSHIP TO BE CREDIBLE

NEW YORK, January 10, 2005 -- The Community of Democracies, a global forum for the world's old and new democracies, should invite to its next biennial gathering only those countries genuinely committed to strengthening democracy, the Democracy Coalition Project and Freedom House said today.

A steering committee of democratic governments meeting January 12 in Santiago, Chile is expected to make final decisions regarding who should come to the May meeting of foreign ministers, and in what capacity: participants or observers.

"For the Community of Democracies to be a credible group, it should only include those governments demonstrating concrete progress toward democratic reforms," said Ted Piccone, Executive Director of the Democracy Coalition Project. "States moving toward democracy but not meeting basic criteria for membership can be invited as observers."

The Community of Democracies (CD) is an association of democratic states dedicated to strengthening democratic values and institutions throughout the world. The Convening Group of the CD is composed of Chile, Czech Republic, India, Mali, Mexico, Poland, Portugal, South Africa, South Korea and the United States. At the last ministerial meeting in Seoul in November 2002, several governments were promoted to participant status, while others were demoted due to backsliding in respect for democracy and human rights.

A comprehensive report presented in December 2004 to the Convening Group by the Democracy Coalition Project and Freedom House analyzes thirty borderline countries that have experienced progress or backsliding since the CD meeting in Seoul and the first CD meeting in Warsaw in June 2000. The report recommends that some past participants and observers not be invited to Santiago or that they should come only as observers, including, among others, Russia, Venezuela, Lebanon, Cote d'Ivoire, Tunisia and Nepal. It recommends that some countries be upgraded to full participant status, including Ukraine, Georgia, Kenya and Madagascar.

The report is available online at:
www.demcoalition.org/html/globa_cd.html#cdsantiago.

Assessments were based on data from the World Bank, Freedom House, the Polity IV Project, the Bertlesmann Transformation Index, Human Rights Watch and the Inter-

Parliamentary Union, as well as local reporting from democracy and human rights monitors.

The report evaluates the performance of the thirty countries according to criteria established by the Community of Democracies membership. The criteria take into account that current CD participants are at different stages in their democratic development, but insist on adherence to specific baselines drawn from international standards, including but not limited to:

- Free, fair, periodic, and competitive elections by universal suffrage;
- Separation of powers;
- Adherence to the rule of law;
- Equality before the law;
- Military accountability to a democratically elected civilian government;
- Respect for freedom of conscience, religion, speech, and expression;
- Freedom from arbitrary arrest;
- Right to a fair trial;
- Protection of gender equality;
- Protection of minority rights;

"It is absolutely vital that membership in the CD be limited only to those countries which meet the members' own criteria for participation," said Freedom House Executive Director Jennifer Windsor. "In this way, incentives are provided for borderline nations to improve their governance and enhance human rights protections. It also ensures that the new Democracy Caucus being organized at the United Nations, whose members belong to the CD, will be composed of like-minded states committed to democracy promotion at home and abroad."

The report also recommends that Taiwan be invited to the Santiago meeting. While Taiwan was not invited to the Warsaw and Seoul meetings, it was nevertheless considered to meet the fundamental criteria for CD membership.

The Democracy Coalition Project is a policy research and advocacy organization working to improve cooperation among democratic governments and civil society to strengthen respect for democracy and human rights. www.demcoalition.org

Freedom House is America's oldest human rights organization. It monitors the state of political rights and civil liberties in every country and operates an array of democracy development programs overseas. www.freedomhouse.org.

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