

**MEETING OF REGIONAL AND MULTILATERAL ORGANIZATIONS ON
PROMOTING AND DEFENDING DEMOCRACY
February 20-21, 2001**

**FINAL COMMUNIQUE OF THE COMMUNITY OF DEMOCRACIES
CONVENING GROUP**

The Convening Group of the Community of Democracies issues the following Communique on the conclusion of the meeting of regional and multilateral organizations to discuss their role in promoting and defending democracy:

1. High-level representatives from 16 regional and multilateral organizations from around the world, government officials, and experts from academia and civil society met at the Organization of American States for two days of meetings to discuss the role of regional organizations in promoting and defending democracy. The meeting was sponsored by the Convening Group of the Community of Democracies, a coalition of 110 governments committed to democracy and the democratic path and to working together to strengthen democratic institutions. The Members of the Convening Group are Chile, the Czech Republic, India, Mali, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Korea., South Africa, and the United States. On behalf of the Convening Group, Chile and the United States requested the Secretary General of the OAS to host this meeting, which was organized in cooperation with the OAS Unit for the Promotion of Democracy.
2. The idea for the meeting was proposed at the first Ministerial Conference of the Community of Democracies held in Warsaw, Poland in June, 2000. In Warsaw, governments endorsed the Warsaw Declaration, committing themselves to a core set of democratic principles and practices and to support one another in meeting these objectives. They all need to seek to assist each other in economic and social development, including eradication of poverty, as an essential contributing factor to the promotion and preservation of democratic development. They also agreed to an agenda for enhanced international cooperation in four areas: to strengthen support for democracy within existing international organizations, share best practices, respond to threats to democracy, and improve coordination of democracy assistance. The purpose of the seminar at the OAS was to discuss the challenges of consolidating democracy, to exchange lessons learned on the role of regional and multilateral organizations in promoting and defending democracy, and to consider ideas for further study and collaboration.
3. At the conference, participants recognized the valuable role a number of regional and multilateral organizations have played during certain episodes of political crisis when the democratic order was threatened or overturned. Participants also highlighted the importance of activities by such organizations to promote democracy, such as election

monitoring, civic education, strengthening of parliaments, ensuring civilian control of the military, promotion and protection of human rights and judicial reform. Several speakers made special note of the important role civil society and an independent media can play in strengthening democratic institutions and processes.

4. Participants agreed on the utility of continuing a process of exchange among regional and multinational organizations as a means of sharing their respective experiences, including best practices. and advancing their ability to respond to member states' request for assistance in strengthening democracy. Participants proposed to make their technical expertise available to each other through formal liaison relationships, electronic linkages and databases, and agreed to share lessons learned in designing and implementing democracy assistance programs. Participants noted that the creation of a democratic political culture, for example through broad-based civic education, is essential to an enduring democratic political system.
5. Participants also discussed ways to develop and apply legal and political instruments for responding to threats to democracy, both as a means of deterring interruptions to democracy and of helping states restore democratic legitimacy in case democratic rule is interrupted. In particular, participants recommended greater collaboration within and among regional and international organizations in supporting one another when there is a democratic crisis in an affected state. Participants agreed that crises include not only coups but also fraudulent elections and the erosion of rights that contribute to a democratic crisis. The linking of so-called "democracy clauses" to membership in political fora and economic and trade arrangements was also discussed. Participants suggested the need for greater discourse on this subject, including among experts who could examine in more detail the main threats to democratic institutions and how best to address them.
6. Discussion about the role regional organizations could play in preventing democracy crisis situations generated ideas for adequate "early warning" mechanisms: to help affected states avoid a painful and potentially violent disruption to the democratic order. Participants suggested that international capacities should be developed to evaluate and synthesize indicators of democratic strain across a number of fronts. The point was made that credible evaluation requires professionalism and impartiality, separating assessment from prescription. Participants mentioned a number of factors that might indicate the need for preventive action, such as fraudulent elections, civil unrest, pervasive human rights violations, attacks on the media, corruption, or severe financial or economic distress. A distinction was drawn between the deterioration of democracy and the interruption of democracy with the recognition that a deterioration would require a more nuanced international response.
7. Several speakers addressed the fundamental links between economic and social development and democratization. They expressed concern that democracy will not survive without minimum levels of economic and social development. and called for greater attention by the international community to the challenges democracies face when poverty and inequality are entrenched.

8. The Convening Group welcomed the announcement made by the Government of Romania, on behalf of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), that it will host, in cooperation with the Community of Democracies Convening Group, the next conference of regional and multilateral organizations on democracy in the fall of 2001.
9. The Convening Group expresses its deep appreciation to the Organization of American States, particularly Secretary General Gaviria, Assistant Secretary General Einaudi, and the staff of the Unit for the Promotion of Democracy for their hard work in organizing the conference.

Washington, DC
February 21, 2001

ANNEX

Keynote Speakers

1. Cesar Gaviria
Secretary General
Organization of American States
2. Juan Gabriel Valdes
Permanent Mission of Chile to the United Nations
Former Minister of Foreign Affairs
3. Surin Pitsuwan
Member of Parliament
Government of Thailand
4. Madeleine Albright
Former Secretary of State
Government of the United States of America
5. Martin Palous
Deputy Foreign Minister
Government of the Czech Republic
6. Diego Garcia Sayan
Minister of Justice
Government of Peru

International Organizations Represented

1. Rio Group
2. MERCOSUR
3. Andean Community
4. Inter-American Development Bank
5. Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe
6. United Nations
7. Interparliamentary Union

8. European Commission
9. Organization of African Unity
10. World Bank
11. Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie
12. Association of South East Asian Nations
13. Council of Europe
14. Commonwealth of Nations
15. International Conference on New and Restored Democracies
16. United Nations Development Programme