

Toward a Community of Democracies Ministerial Conference Communiqué Warsaw, Poland, June 27, 2000

The Government of Poland, on behalf of the Convening Group, issues the following Communiqué.

1. The Foreign Ministers and other representatives of 107 countries from around the world that have committed themselves to a democratic path came together on June 26-27, 2000, in Warsaw, Poland to attend an historic conference entitled "Towards a Community of Democracies." The conference was hosted by the government of Poland, with assistance from the co-convening governments of Chile, the Czech Republic, India, the Republic of Korea, Mali, and the United States.

2. The purpose of the conference was to formulate an agenda for enhanced international cooperation aimed at:

- Encouraging relevant international and regional institutions to be transparent, effective, and supportive of efforts to strengthen democracy;
- Facilitating the sharing of best practices to deepen democracy and to meet common long-term challenges faced by democracies;
- Improving mechanisms and practices that states have employed to respond to immediate threats to democracy; and
- More effectively coordinating assistance for countries undergoing democratic transitions and pursuing democratic consolidation.

3. States participating in the Community of Democracies conference acknowledged a debt of gratitude to preceding and proposed international gatherings supportive of democracy, such as the UN-sponsored International Conferences of New or Restored Democracies held in Manila in June 1988, in Managua in July 1994, and in Bucharest in September 1997, and which is scheduled to convene in Cotonou in December 2000; as well as the initiative of the Government of Mali to host in Bamako, in 2000, following the Declaration of the 1999 Moncton Summit of the International Organization of the Francophonie, an international ministerial level symposium on the practices of democracy in the francophone areas.

4. Community of Democracies participants also recognized the importance of measures such as resolution 1080 of the Organization of American States, decision 12/XXXV of the Organization of African Unity and the documents of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe on the Human Dimension, which commit member States to take certain steps in the event of an interruption of democratic government, as well as the 1991 Harare Commonwealth Declaration which commits members to fundamental democratic principles.

5. In addition, Community of Democracies participants welcomed the 1999 Resolution on the Promotion of the Right to Democracy and the 2000 Resolution on Promoting and Consolidating Democracy which were adopted by the UN Human Rights Commission in

Geneva, and pledged support for future efforts towards adopting a similar resolution in the UN General Assembly.

6. It has been in the spirit of these extraordinary achievements, and of the principles set forth in the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that Community of Democracies participants actively consulted to formulate and issue a Warsaw Declaration that expresses their common aspiration and commitment to promote, strengthen and preserve democracy. The Government of Poland, at the request of the Convening Group, will ask that the Warsaw Declaration be circulated as an official document of the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations.

7. Community of Democracies participants expressed their satisfaction with the large number of states attending the Warsaw conference, June 25-27, 2000. The Convening Group, which was responsible for issuing the invitations, recognized that since invitations were issued, some controversy had arisen regarding electoral processes in some countries invited to the conference.

The Convening Group took the opportunity to express the need of every country to respect the core democratic principles and practices which governments participating in the Warsaw meeting pledged their best efforts to uphold. The Convening Group noted that the Warsaw Declaration affirms a full commitment to free and fair elections as the basis of authority and legitimacy of government and as the exclusive way to express the will of the people to choose their representatives, and declared its full support for, and confidence in, the role of international organizations in monitoring these processes.

8. Working through Ministerial Panels, Community of Democracies participants agreed to intensify coordination and cooperation among their governments to strengthen support for democracy by and within international and regional organizations; to share best practices regarding long-term challenges; to respond to interruptions of, and immediate threats to, democratic rule; and to coordinate democracy assistance as follows:

Panel I - Cooperation in International and Regional Organizations: Panel participants agreed to continue supporting the involvement of international and regional organizations in the task of strengthening democratic institutions and responding to gross human rights violations, in accordance with transparent standards and core democratic principles. There was support for creating a "democracy caucus" within existing institutions as a mechanism to promote dialogue and build consensus among those who share our goals. In particular, there was support for the idea of having such a caucus work on building support for the Government of Romania's democracy resolution at this fall's UN General Assembly. There was a common view in favor of making international and regional organizations more open and responsive to citizens' needs, and of harnessing information technology to promote democracy. Participants were committed to encourage international financial institutions and other appropriate economic agencies to consider the benefits of good governance, transparency, rule of law, and accountability in their deliberations.

Panel II - Sharing Best Practices: Panel participants agreed that pursuit of the ideals of democracy is a continuous process. They agreed that sharing best practices is an effective

way to realize their common objective of preserving and strengthening democracy and supporting new and emerging democracies, in a spirit of cooperation, equality, and mutual respect. Participants consider it important to continue the dialogue without creating elaborate structures that may be difficult to implement at this stage and without restricting the flexibility that a new forum must have to respond to new ideas. They agreed that they should meet as often as possible, especially during the UN sessions and other international meetings. They would also welcome voluntary initiatives from member countries to hold dialogues on specific issues concerning the democratic process.

Panel III - Responding to Threats to Democracy: Panel participants agreed on the need for proposals to strengthen prompt reactions by international and regional organizations in order to enhance prevention and deal with crises. This should include not only the most extreme cases, such as the overthrow of democratic governments, but also in cases of irregular elections. Participants agreed that responses by regional organizations to threats to democracy need to be strengthened, and that regional organizations should coordinate to share lessons learned among themselves. Participants also suggested that the Community of Democracies at large should consider ways to support efforts by regional and multilateral organizations to prevent and respond to threats and crises. It is important to promote dialogue aimed at improving and establishing cooperation on this issue. To this end, participants felt that this issue could be studied further, perhaps by establishing an ad hoc panel of experts to examine different mechanisms, practices, and experiences. Participants also stressed the need to address terrorism and other transnational challenges to democracy, in accordance with norms of international law.

Panel IV - Coordinating Democracy Assistance: Panel participants concurred on a common framework for cooperating on democracy assistance that includes the principles and practices embodied in the Warsaw Declaration but recognized that institutional arrangements will vary depending on the cultural, historical, socio-economic, and other conditions which make each country unique. The panel also agreed that genuine partnership and cooperation among donors, host country governments, and civil society is the most effective approach to democratization. Finally, the panel welcomed the offer of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) to create a secretariat to help coordinate democracy assistance and, if possible, to create a common framework for such assistance.

9. Community of Democracies participants emphasized that the economic and social dimensions of democratic development, including the eradication of poverty and equal participation by women in the democratic process, should be urgently addressed. The Convening Group agreed that mutual cooperation is urgently needed to help eliminate poverty in order to fulfill the promise of democracy, and noted that the Warsaw Declaration includes specific language under core democratic principles and practices that affirms economic and social rights and equal participation by women. The Declaration also cites the need to strengthen cooperation to fight terrorism and other transnational challenges, and to do so in accordance with respect for human rights of all persons and for the norms of international law. The Convening Group pledged to ensure

that these subjects are fully discussed at future meetings of the Community of Democracies.

10. In view of the significant number of actions proposed and endorsed at the June 25-27 conference in Warsaw, participants decided that future conferences of the Community of Democracies would assist them to pursue their goals, and welcomed offers by the governments of the Republic of Korea, Chile, Mali, and Portugal to host future conferences.

11. Finally, Community of Democracies participants expressed appreciation to the government of Poland and to other governments of the Convening Group for their successful efforts towards arranging the Warsaw conference, as well as for their continued willingness to follow post-conference activities and to cooperate with and assist the governments of the Republic of Korea, Chile, Mali, and Portugal in planning future conferences.

Source:

U.S. Department of State