

Community of Democracies

Criteria for Participation and Procedures

September 27, 2002

At their meeting of September 12, 2000, the Foreign Ministers of the Community of Democracies Convening Group agreed to direct senior officials to prepare proposals that would allow for the establishment of basic criteria for participation in the Community and establish procedures to govern its activities as well as those of the Convening Group.

The Final Warsaw Declaration provides a reasonable approach to the definition of criteria for participation, which should reflect a clear linkage between participation and the observance of internationally accepted fundamental democratic principles, values and standards in the countries concerned.

The criteria should also reflect a balance between the Community of Democracies aim to promote and strengthen democracy and the acknowledgement that its current participants are at differing stages in their democratic development.

I. Participation Criteria

The Final Warsaw Declaration draws on major principles of international law and international standards codified namely in the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The Warsaw Declaration recognised the interdependence between peace, development, human rights and democracy, as well as the universality of democratic values. The Community of Democracies should be a privileged forum for the defense and promotion of this comprehensive concept of democracy.

In this sense, States willing to participate in the Community of Democracies should respect democratic standards as follows:

- Free, fair and periodic elections, by universal and equal suffrage, conducted by secret ballot
- Multipartyism, the freedom to form democratic political parties that can participate in elections
- Guaranteeing that everyone can exercise his or her right to take part in the government of his or her country, directly or through freely chosen representatives
- The rule of Law
- The obligation of an elected government to protect and defend the constitution, refraining from extra-constitutional actions and to relinquish power when its legal mandate ends
- Ensuring equality before the law and equal protection under the law, including equal access to the law
- Separation of powers, separation of the judiciary, legislative and executive independence of the judiciary from the political or any other power
Ensuring that the military remains accountable to democratically elected civilian government
- The respect of human rights, fundamental freedoms and the inherent dignity of the human being, notably

- Freedom of thought, conscience, religion, belief, peaceful assembly and association, freedom of speech, of opinion and of expression, including to exchange and receive ideas and information through any media, regardless of frontiers: free, independent and pluralistic media
- The right of every person to be free from arbitrary arrest or detention from torture or any other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment
- The right to a fair trial, including to be presumed innocent until proven guilty and to be sentenced proportionally to the crime, free from cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment
- The right to full and non-discriminatory participation, regardless of gender, race, colour, language, religion or belief, in the political, economical and cultural life
- The promotion of gender equality
- The rights of children, elderly and persons with disabilities
- The rights of national, ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities, including the right to freely express, preserve and develop their identity
- The right of individuals to shape their own destiny free from any illegitimate constraint

Governments are to defend and to protect all of these rights and to provide the appropriate legislation for this purpose.

The observance of international law as well as of internationally accepted democratic principles and values.

Respect for universally accepted labour standards.

II. Criteria for Conference Participation

The Convening Group (CG) will draft the list of participants and observers, not based on participation in the Warsaw meeting but rather on a state's adherence to main requisites. In subsequent years the CG will review each participant's, observer's, and non-participant's compliance with requisites to determine participation.

If any state fails to comply, for a reasonable period of time, with one or several of these main requisites, it will not be invited to participate in any events of the Community of Democracies, for a limited time and as long as deemed necessary.

Alternatively, a state may be invited as an observer for as long as is determined appropriate.

The fact that countries find themselves at different stages in their democratic development is to be considered. Nevertheless situations that raise a question regarding their commitment to democratic values will be evaluated by the CG. Different stages must not mean different criteria.

III. Other factors likely to promote democracy, security and development

Democracy means freedom, freedom to choose and substitute political leaders and parties in power. However, democracy must also mean freedom to choose what one can do with ones resources. Therefore, free initiative should be another component of democracy. Modern and competitive economies play an important role in giving real substance to democracies.

Education and access to information are fundamental in building and consolidating a democratic society. Education is both a human right in itself and an indispensable means of realising other human rights. Education is a tool for empowering every human being to actively participate in the decisions, and it is a fundamental vehicle for combating poverty and for resisting discrimination in all its forms. Education makes it difficult for dictators, whose weapon is ignorance.

Governments should by all means avoid violence in the political speech. This sort of aggression leads to a climate of intimidation that prevents people from exercising in its entirety their political and civil rights. Democratic societies must be free from fear.

IV. Procedures

Decisions concerning participation or matters related to the Convening Group or the Community of Democracies (CD) should be taken by the consensus of the CG.

CD meetings will be held every two years by agreed rotation within CG countries. Countries hosting CD meetings will chair the CG starting with the calendar year following the previous meeting. Senior officials of the CG will meet periodically in the interim in order to guide follow-up activities and preparation for upcoming CD meetings.

CG Ambassador and Sherpa level meetings will be called by the CG Chair as necessary.

Countries can either request to be CD participants or observers, or they may be invited by the CG.

A Quatro constituted by one representative from each continent, including past, present and future CD conference hosts, will facilitate conference planning. In keeping with this responsibility, the Quatro will apply criteria articulated in this paper to determine which countries should be invited to participate in, and which countries should be invited to observe, CD Conferences. Quatro recommendations will be endorsed by the CG.

- Invitations to participate will be issued to genuine democracies and those countries undergoing democratic consolidation, in accordance with the established criteria
- Invitations to observe will be issued to countries that fail to meet international standards of democracy and human rights, but are in a transition process and have given concrete steps along the lines of the Criteria above.
- Observers are encouraged to participate in the roundtables. Observers may adhere to final documents and resolutions once adopted.
- Invitation can be issued to international or regional organizations when it is deemed appropriate.

Sharing of information among participants of the CG and other participants of the CD is to be assured.

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For more information about the Second Ministerial of the Community of Democracies, held 10-12 November 2002 in Seoul, Korea, please visit the official website: [http:// www.cd2002.go.kr](http://www.cd2002.go.kr)