

### **Report Round-Table III, Regional and interregional Cooperation for Democratic Governance: Exchange of Regional and Interregional Experiences to Strengthen the Rule of Law and Political Parties.**

Distinguished ministers and Heads of Delegations, dear colleagues. I am here to report on the progress that we have achieved yesterday during our discussions on the topic of Regional and Interregional Cooperation for democratic Governance: Exchange of Regional and Interregional Experiences to Strengthen the Rule of Law and Political Parties.

The round-table was chaired by the United States of America and co-chaired by Portugal. I would like to stress the valuable contribution not only of the representative of IDEA in her capacity as motivator, but also of the representatives of the Club of Madrid, UNDP and of several NGOs involved in the non-governmental process of the Community of Democracies.

Of the wide range of ideas that were put forward during yesterday's very rich debate, the following reflections received particular attention:

- Given that the Community of Democracies shares with other international and regional organizations the same goals towards global democratization, it can provide a complementary input to their efforts and constitute an important source of support and encouragement to regional and interregional initiatives.
- Many stressed the importance of cooperating with regional organizations and the impact of political and economic processes of regional integration on the promotion of democratic principles respect for human right, etc.
- Peer review mechanisms were mentioned as promising initiatives at the regional level.
- Several suggestions were made to enhance mechanisms for sharing experience and lessons- learned from previous successful examples, in areas such as electoral processes, promotion of transparency in political party systems, capacity-building, independence of the judiciary, education for democracy, promotion of the rule of law and human rights.
- Some of these mechanisms can be made operational through the creation of foundations, institutions for research and dissemination of information and the establishment of networks including NGOs with the expertise in accompanying democratization efforts.
- Attention was also given to the possible added value of setting up a network for providing financial resources for capacity building in new democratic countries. Those mechanisms would contribute to the structural adjustment

and institution-building that was recognized as a key element for the successes of democratic transitions.

- Several delegates discussed the importance of reviewing the link between democracy promotion and both debt forgiveness and the actions of regional financial institutions.
- Recognizing the diversity of the democratization processes, several delegates commented on developing appropriate tools to address different contexts. Hence, in some cases the goal is to improve the political systems in advanced democracies, while in other cases the aim is to provide assistance to countries in transition. At the most extreme end are those countries emerging from conflict or in dire economic circumstance. In such situations the basic standards of democracy are an initial target. Support at that stage must include financial instruments in order to ensure sustainable change.
- Illustrations of what the Community of Democracies can contribute to supporting emerging democracies are the missions undertaken in East-Timor and Georgia.
- In the same context, the Hungarian proposal to establish the Centre for Democratic Transition was welcomed by those intervening in the discussion.
- Some delegates urged the Community of Democracies to establish a mechanism to suspend countries where there is backsliding of democratic principles and practices and a mechanism, to coordinate support to countries in transition.

In addition, some participants shared their own national experiences and stressed the main and most recent improvements towards consolidation of their democratic systems.

Finally, I should also add that Lithuania has announced its commitment to open a University in exile in Vilnius for Belarusian scholars. The United States proposed that the working group look at how an international election mechanism can support election administration.

To conclude I will convey to you the readiness of Portugal and the United States of America to pursue the follow-up work of roundtable III concerning the Regional and Interregional Cooperation, in conjunction with the next Presidency of Mali. In this sense a call was made for an active engagement of all interested parties in this exercises. The aim is to explore ways to focus on one or two of the themes discussed that will provide food for thought and action over the next two years.

Thank you.