



International Centre for Democratic Transition

Democracy Newsletter

Issued by the International Centre for Democratic Transition, Vol.1. No.1., September 2005

THE BIRTH

Former American Ambassador to Budapest Mark Palmer came out with the idea of establishing an institute for democratic transition in Budapest. The idea was welcomed by Hungarian decision makers and in April 2005, at the Santiago de Chile conference of the Council for a Community of Democracies, Hungarian Minister for Foreign Affairs Ferenc Somogyi announced the birth of the International Centre for Democratic Transition (ICDT).

THE ANNOUNCEMENT

"Situated in the heart of Europe, Hungary has played an important role as a bridgehead of stability in Central and Eastern Europe. We Hungarians have been deeply committed to the idea of our region moving beyond past grievances and realizing our common dream of free societies living in peace next to each other. This is why the Hungarian Government has recently decided to establish what we hope will prove to be an international power-house in Budapest, the International Center for Democratic Transition. We are of course not alone. Many countries have developed their forms, processes and practices of their respective transitions. The Budapest International Center for Democratic Transition will collect and promulgate this experience. And as time passes, the expertise of countries only now embarking

on democratic transition will also be added to the extending, knowledge-based democracy."

Minister for Foreign Affairs Ferenc Somogyi,
Santiago de Chile, April 30, 2005

HUNGARY'S COMMITMENT

"I am proud to announce that an International Centre for Democratic Transition has been set up in Budapest. The Centre will promote research and offer assistance for those who seek advice. It will be an open and international institution: the ICDT is the initiative of Hungary, and we do hope that you will find it worthy of support."

President of the Republic of Hungary
László Sólyom, 2005 World Summit of
the United Nations, New York City,
September 14, 2005

IN THE MIDDLE OF WORLD ATTENTION

The United States will continue to call upon our friends and allies across the world to help in this noble cause. And today, many nations are stepping forward with practical help. And some of the most active countries are those who have had recent experience with tyrants themselves. Hungary has established an International Center for Democratic Transition to share its experiences with emerging democracies."

US President Bush, at an International
Republican Institute Dinner, May 18, 2005

SYNERGY OF RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

Institutionally, the Centre focuses on two key activities. The research and database unit conducts primary source and applied research and builds up a database on democratic transitions worldwide.

The operations unit puts the results of research into practice on the ground.

WHAT MAKES ICDT UNIQUE?

■ Democracy building is a complex and sophisticated process requiring a wide range of knowledge, skills and experience. There is a number of institutions and individuals worldwide who have accumulated such capacities over the decades. ICDT plans to become a hub of these organizations and individuals and work in close partnerships. ICDT's goal is to find for each particular project the best practice in the world.

■ ICDT focuses on democratic transition as a process, rather than as a momentary move from dictatorship to democracy. As we have seen in both historical and contemporary examples, this lengthy process is vastly difficult and has many pitfalls. ICDT assists countries that have made the decision to move towards democracy by collecting, analyzing and transferring the experience of others who have already stepped forward – by showing both the best practices to follow and the mistakes to avoid.

PARTNERSHIPS

ICDT will work in close cooperation with other institutions working in this area. We have already established close working relations with the Council of the Community of Democracies and started it with International IDEA, with the Arab Partnership Democracy Centre and others.

INTERNATIONAL BOARD*

Chair:

H.E. Onyszkiewicz, Janusz (Poland), MEP, fmr Minister of Defense

Members:

H.E. Blinken, Donald, former US Ambassador to Budapest, Secretary General, UN Association

The Hon. Boraine, Alexander (South Africa), Truth and Reconciliation Commission

H.E. Brinker, Nancy, former US Ambassador to Budapest

The Right Hon. Campbell, Kim (Canada), fmr. Prime Minister, Secretary General, Club of Madrid

H.E. Prof. Geremek, Bronislaw (Poland), MEP, fmr Minister of Foreign Affairs

H.E. Ilvez, Thomas (Estonia), MEP, fmr Minister of Foreign Affairs

Ms. Licht, Sonja (Serbia- Montenegro), President and Founder, Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence

H.E. Martonyi, János (Hungary), fmr Minister of Foreign Affairs

H.E. Palmer, Mark, former US Ambassador to Budapest

HRH Prince el Hassan bin Talal, The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

The Hon. Zalaquett, Jose (Chile), Truth and Reconciliation Commission, fmr. Chairman of Amnesty International

*as of September 26

INAUGURAL CONFERENCE

The International Centre for Democratic Transition's inaugural conference on the 'European-American Partnership for Building Democracy Worldwide' takes place this Fall in Budapest. Several European decision makers and experts, as well as Ms. Paula Dobriansky, Undersecretary for Democracy and Global Affairs of the US Department of State, will address the conference.

ICDT'S CURRENT PROJECTS

■ *Iraqi Constitution.* ICDT facilitated the participation of Central and Eastern European constitutional law experts in the process of drafting the Iraqi constitution.

■ *World Database of Democratic Transitions.* ICDT started to conduct a series of deep interviews with those who were involved in the democratic transitions worldwide. Several hundred interviews will be recorded and analyzed.

ICDT'S PLANNED PROJECTS

■ *Backing Municipal Development in the Western Balkans.* The project aims at sharing the experiences of Central and Eastern European municipal governments with their counterparts in the Balkans.

■ *Implementing the Experience of the Visegrad Cooperation in the Western Balkans.* The project's goal is to find the key factors which contributed to the success of the Visegrad cooperation. Afterwards

identify the common ground on which countries of the Western Balkans could come together to build a joint platform and achieve a successful cooperation in the international area.

■ *Assisting in Formulating the Government Program for the Haiti Opposition.* Upon a request of a Haiti NGO, ICDT plans to assist in formulating a government program for the Haiti opposition.

■ *Moving Towards a More Pluralistic Society in Belarus.* ICDT plans to assist in creating a more pluralistic society through strengthening civil society, individual and societal initiatives, and institution building.

■ *Collecting best practices of elections and exploring their usability in Asian countries.* ICDT plans to collect the different practices of elections worldwide and explore whether they could be applicable in Asian countries.

OUR STAFF

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¹ Website is expected to be operational later this year.