



**November 14, 2007**

**The International Steering Committee Statement on Taiwan**  
**ISC Expresses Outrage at Denial of Visas for Taiwanese**  
**Nongovernmental Participants to the Bamako Ministerial**

The International Steering Committee (Nongovernmental) of the Community of Democracies is profoundly dismayed about the refusal of the Government of Mali to grant visas to two officials of the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy (TFD) who were supposed to have attended the Fourth Ministerial Meeting in Bamako.

The TFD is an independent non-governmental entity which has played an important role in promoting democracy in Asia as well as globally. In particular, it has been a strong supporter of the Nongovernmental Process before, during, and since the Santiago Ministerial: a TFD representative is a member of the 21-person International Steering Committee, and the TFD has hosted or sponsored three regional workshops in Asia, as well as provided funds for participants of other delegates in many international meetings, including this Ministerial in Bamako. It also provided a small start-up grant to the Malian Executive Secretariat of the Nongovernmental Process.

The Foreign Ministry of Mali has attempted to justify the denial of visas on the grounds of lack of diplomatic recognition of Taiwan. This justification is essentially spurious, as evidenced by the fact that representatives of the TFD and other Taiwanese nongovernmental delegates have participated in every previous Ministerial meeting. Indeed, Taiwanese private citizens are welcome in virtually every country in the world, regardless of the state of official diplomatic relations. This reflects the fact that Taiwan is a developed, peaceful, and democratic society (e.g., it has been ranked as "free" by Freedom House for more than 10 years).

The ISC can only conclude that the decision of the Mali government is an arbitrary and politically discriminatory interference in the Nongovernmental Process itself, contrary to the responsibility placed in the hands of the government as host of the Community of Democracies Ministerial. Further, we regard as contrary to the Warsaw Declaration and the very nature of the Community of Democracies the denial of participation in a global meeting of the Community of Democracies of an organization widely acknowledged as playing a leading role in supporting democracy.

Allowing this precedent to stand would set the Community of Democracies on a dangerous path. It would, ironically, indicate that even countries which do not meet the criteria for participation can use political means to influence participation in this forum, and by extension the content of the discussions.

Therefore, we expect an official explanation from the Malian government. At the same time, we urge all participating governments, especially the members of the Convening Group, to support this appeal and take all necessary measures to ensure that such incidents do not recur. Only in this way can they maintain the integrity of the Community of Democracies.