



**Reunião Ministerial Informal da Comunidade das Democracias
à Margem da 63^a Sessão da AGNU**

Nova Iorque, 26 de Setembro de 2008

**Projecto de Intervenção de
S. Exa o Ministro de Estado e dos Negócios Estrangeiros**

I. OPENING REMARKS

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the first ministerial gathering under the Portuguese Chair of the Community of Democracies. As one of the founding members of the Convening Group and a staunch believer in the values this Community stands for, Portugal is truly honoured to steer this forum.
- During our tenure we will strive to reinforce the role of the Community of Democracies in strengthening democratic institutions and increasing dialogue and cooperation among democratic nations.
- Before sharing the Chair's views and priorities, allow me a special word of appreciation for Minister Moctar Oane and Minister Maris Riekstins – my Troika colleagues who join me at this table and with whom I will continue to work closely.



II. VIEWS OF THE PORTUGUESE CHAIR ON THE COMMUNITY OF DEMOCRACIES

Dear Colleagues,

- Next year, in Lisbon, we will be celebrating the tenth anniversary of the Community of Democracies, which has come a long way since its establishment in 1999.
- The Community has fostered dialogue and cooperation among democratic nations at international, regional and sub-regional level. It has developed a number of action-oriented projects based on the work of the Santiago Working Groups. It has also sought to strengthen its institutional capacity: in the past years it has undertaken the enlargement of the Convening Group, the institution of a troika mechanism and the establishment of a Permanent Secretariat. This is just a quick snap shot of what the Community has accomplished so far.
- Over the last decade, Democracy has become the predominant form of government, and now exists in all types of States, regardless of religious, philosophical and political traditions. Many have referred to this global phenomenon as the “triumph of democracy”.
- Democracy assistance and promotion have become an important element of foreign policy and international relations. Key (international and regional) actors, both governmental and non-governmental, have mainstreamed concepts such as free and fair elections, good governance, transparency, accountability and rule of law. Many organisations are now actively involved in “democracy promotion” and consider it a key element of their interaction with States and other actors.
- Nonetheless, democratic governance continues to face numerous challenges in many democracies – both old and new; some democratic processes have evolved in ways not entirely predicted at the end of the nineties, whilst others have suffered serious



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reversals or temporary setbacks. These “constant but changing challenges” demand a continuous redefinition of democratic practices, as well as of the instruments and methods democracy promotion relies upon. I look forward to our thematic debate on the topic later on and hope it will provide us with helpful insight.

- Thus, many of the ongoing political and academic debates on “democracy promotion” as an instrument of international relations seem to suggest that a “fresh approach” may be in need. Considering that much of these discussions mirror a great deal of what has been the experience of the Community of Democracies, one could also argue in favour of taking a “new look” at the Community itself.
- It is in this light that Portugal proposes to celebrate the Community's first decade by reaffirming and clarifying its role in an international setting that has changed somewhat since the Warsaw Ministerial Conference in 1999. Together we should set a forward looking agenda and identify priorities that reinforce the Community of Democracies key attributes and added value.
- Today, I would simply mention three (of these key attributes):
 - The Community's two parallel but interconnected processes – governmental and non governmental – that favour partnerships between governments and civil society.
 - A vocation to act as a forum for sharing lessons learned and exchanging best practices between different democratic systems, societies and cultures.
 - An ability to develop innovative regional and inter-regional partnerships; both through government-to-government and peoples-to-peoples links.

III. PRIORITIES OF THE PORTUGUESE CHAIR OF THE CoD



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- Democracy is an ongoing and changing process. The challenges are numerous and, in many ways, democratic governance has to yet succeed in building a true culture of democracy and in keeping pace with the demands and expectations of citizens. This is why we have selected **Democratic Governance as the underlying theme of our Chairmanship**.

- Regarding concrete **priorities**, they include the following:
 - Promoting the Community of Democracies as a framework for mutual learning and best practice exchanges;

 - Building regional and inter-regional networks and reinforcing cooperative partnerships between the Community of Democracies and regional, sub-regional, international and global fora.

 - Strengthening the role of the Democracy Caucus in providing political support to democracy-related resolutions and reinforcing multilateral efforts in promoting and strengthening democratic principles world wide. We are also keen on exploring the Caucus as a forum for dialogue and exchanging best practices, thus conferring greater visibility to the Community of Democracies in the framework of the United Nations.

 - Enhancing cooperation between the governmental and non-governmental components of the Community of Democracies. The Diplomats Handbook which was publicly launched in Lisbon last June is a good example of a successful joint effort. Other examples of the partnerships we seek to develop with civil society were the summer schools of two renowned national political institutes that took place in June and which we co-sponsored and cooperated with.



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- We also plan to undertake a number of political, expert and technical assistance missions, thus reinforcing the operational capabilities of the CoD.
- Another important objective is that of **strengthening the effectiveness of the Community of Democracies at an institutional level, while making it more participatory and democratic.**
 - To this end, we have established a Troika Mechanism that seeks to ensure smooth transitions between chairs and greater coherence and sustainability of actions undertaken.
 - We would also like to propose a rotation principle on the basis of which one quarter of the members of the Convening Group would be renewed at each ministerial conference.
- The establishment of a **Permanent Secretariat in Warsaw** represents an important step towards reinforcing the capacity and capabilities of the Community of Democracy. Allow me to thank Poland for its generous offer to host this new institution and to congratulate Professor Bronislaw Mistzal on his recent appointment as Director of the Secretariat.

IV. CLOSING REMARKS

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- The international community has much to do in aiding democracies of all sorts. As a forum that brings together diverse democratic cultures and traditions, the Community of Democracies can assist in advancing the cause of democracy in many ways.



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- Portugal will endeavour to enhance the role of the Community of Democracies in protecting the integrity of democratic processes and enhancing the effectiveness of inclusive and participatory democratic governance. We count on your support in promoting the Communities' values and principles worldwide.

Thank you.