

## Thematic Roundtable 4

### **Regional Organizations and the Democracy Caucus at the United Nations: Promoting Peace, Democratic Governance and Expanding Prosperity**

*(Panel to discuss policies and actions regional organizations can develop and undertake to foster regional peace and stability in the context of democratic governance, favoring more equitable access to and distribution of wealth and to articulate steps Community of Democracies' members can take within their respective regional organizations to bolster these effort, as well as measures to be taken to strengthen the role of the Democracy Caucus at the United Nations and improve coordination of the Community at this level)*

#### **General Observations:**

- The panel discussion took place within a spirit of collaboration that allowed for frank statements and recommendations for moving forward on enhancing the role of the Community of Democracies and the role it can play with regional organizations in enhancing democratic governance, peace and prosperity.
- Participants on the panel represented: Portugal (Chair); International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (Facilitator and Rapporteur); **CoD Member States:** Brazil; Cyprus; Kenya; Mali; Romania; Senegal; Slovenia; Turkey; Ukraine; United States. CSOs: Africa Democracy Forum; ACDHR-Gambia; Democracy Coalition Project/Club de Madrid; Initiatives for International Dialogue (Asia); Mali (NGO-FPUN).
- Discussions were held on the role of the Community in working with countries in which democratic practise is not the mainstay, for example in monitoring their commitment to human rights and the Warsaw CoD principles and not shying away from raising violations of these principles with MS when necessary; while it is clear that Member States of the Community of Democracies may differ in approach – some may prefer using quiet diplomacy to promote change while other Member States are more forceful in their convictions – this does not rule the possibility of influencing by exemplary leadership and the setting of standards. However, the issue of approach still needs to be agreed upon as this can create divisions among CoD member states.
- A major discussion developed on the need to bridge the gap between words (principles) and action (implementation/interests) which more often than not relates to specific contexts; the major challenge for the Community of Democracies will be to determine how to avoid inconsistencies when moving from words to action, particularly when dealing with individual cases. There is a potential yet to be explored within the UN Democracy Caucus to bridge this

divide and mobilize CoD Member States around certain initiatives or causes that will not only benefit them as individual member states but which will be of benefit to regional organizations and the UN and moreover, the promotion and cementing of democratic principles across the board.

- There was agreement on the imperative need for the CoD and its Member States to shift into implementation gear. To do so, it will need to do take stock of the following:
  - Lead by example;
  - Set standards in different regional and international fora;
  - Strengthen support **to** regional organizations and the United Nations;
  - Strengthen support **between** regional organizations and between regional organizations and the United Nations beyond Peace and Security in order to include Democracy (for example through support to the Political Affairs Division of the AU, beyond just electoral observation);
  - Find means to ensure that the CoD is not mistaken as an initiative confined to a particular group of states but rather represents principles and standards that all its member states adhere to and wish to share with others;
  - Support the important role **of** civil society in strengthening the CoD, regional organizations, and the United Nations;
  - Support the strengthening of relations **between** civil society, national Ministries for Foreign Affairs; regional organizations and the United Nations;
  - Emphasise the need for Human Rights and Democracy education and the important role of youth in nurturing and strengthening democracy within and across borders;
  - Include the basic concepts of Human Security (freedom from want, freedom from fear and the right to live in dignity) as principles of the CoD to include not only civil and political rights but also economic and social rights as a mean to enhance the links between democracy and development;
  - Develop a website once the CoD Secretariat in Warsaw has been established and post key documentation on the site such as human rights and democracy training modules in order to ensure accessibility;
  - Support significant improvements in terms of CoD outreach so that the principles of the CoD trickle down the grass-roots level;
  - Promote creativity in all of the CoD's work.

### **Key recommendations for the CoD regarding regional organizations:**

- Strengthen existing institutions and mechanisms of regional organizations in their endeavours to implement their respective Democracy Charters (OAS, AU) and promote exchanges of experience between these organizations [as in the fledging “democracy bridge” between the OAS and the AU];

- Learn from cross-organizational cooperation that has borne results in the past in terms of enhancing coordination and avoiding duplication – for example, between the OSCE and the Council of Europe;
- Build and draw from the experience of sub-regional / inter-governmental organisations such as ECOWAS, CPLP, European Stability Pact, Commonwealth and international IDEA, and organizations such as the Club de Madrid:
- Support processes underway in Asia to develop and or strengthen a regional organization that would be founded on democratic principles;
- Support the role that civil society organizations can play within these different for a particularly since civil society organizations are often unable to work on democracy building issues at the national level;
- In terms of the latter, the relation civil society organizations currently have with the CoD should be and perhaps by granting them an appropriate observer status to the community; this in turn would improve the existing partnership and allow for more systematic collaboration. Such a collaboration could follow in regional organizations and at the national level, not as a means to co-opt civil society organizations but as a means to formalize the increasingly important role they can play alongside member states in promoting democracy.

### **Key recommendations regarding the Democracy Caucus**

The main challenge will be for the UN Democracy caucus to determine a real *raison d'être*, to identify its real added value, as there are already several “caucuses” operating in NY. In finding a niche for itself the CoD should be guided by the principles. This in itself requires serious attention given the diverging approaches when it comes to real implementation on matters of principle.

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c. kavanagh (International IDEA), Rapporteur, Panel 4