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ISC/CD Condemns Coup in Mauritania, Urges Peaceful Resolution of Political Crisis and Restoration of Constitutional Governance

The International Steering Committee of the Nongovernmental Process of the Community of Democracies (ISC/CD) condemns the coup staged by the Mauritanian military on August 6, which has placed President Sidi Ould Cheikh Abdallahi and Prime Minister Yahia Ould Ahmed El-Ouakef in military custody and installed a "State Council" led by military officers to govern. We call on all parties to insist on a peaceful resolution of the current political crisis in accordance with democratic constitutional principles.

The Senate and Presidential elections held in 2007 were widely viewed as free and fair, representing the will of the people and a strong step forward for democracy. President Abdallahi's dismissal of the elected government in May of this year was a setback to this progress, and the failure of successive governments to stabilize the political situation in the country represents a significant challenge to democracy. This challenge, however, requires a peaceful resolution without resort to military intervention. The coup is contrary to the Lome declaration on Unconstitutional Changes of Government and the principles enshrined in the Constitutive Act of the African Union. Article 2.4 of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance resolves to "Prohibit, reject and condemn unconstitutional change of government in any Member State as a serious threat to stability, peace, security and development." The AU has acted quickly to condemn this coup, and the ISC/CD encourages the continuation of AU efforts in the crisis.

The ISC/CD also urges the member governments of the Community of Democracies (CD) to take measures to support the restoration of democratic governance in Mauritania. The Warsaw Declaration commits CD members to "cooperate to discourage and resist the threat to democracy posed by the overthrow of constitutionally elected governments." This commitment of the CD was reaffirmed in the 2007 Bamako Consensus, in which members pledge to "Take collaborative measures or actions...to respond to overt threats to democracy, such as disruption of constitutional rule or persistent unconstitutional alteration of the democratic order, by working together within the framework of regional and international organizations." We call on CD governments to honor this commitment in addressing the present crisis in Mauritania.

The ISC/CD is a global network of civil society organizations committed to democracy and human rights, related to the Community of Democracies.