

**Community of Democracies**  
**Report of the Portuguese Presidency of the Convening Group**

1. Purposes

The Portuguese Presidency of the Community of Democracies is strongly committed to move the march of democracies forward both through the uphold of an effective and inclusive dialogue between the democratic countries that share the goals of the CoD's founding fathers and the support to transitional democracies and developing countries.

Promoting Democratic Governance anchored on a solid relationship between the governmental and intergovernmental processes of the CoD also constituted a key feature of the Presidency's program. Particularly important to this effect is the role performed by the nongovernmental process to prepare the CG's decisions on the Ministerial invitation process.

Another aspect that the Portuguese Presidency has valued as extremely significant is the CoD's vocation to act as a Forum for sharing lessons learned and exchanging best practices both through government channels and civil societies' networks.

The particularly severe financial and economical crisis that occurred in the meantime demonstrated not only the absolute relevance of democratic values but also the need for the CoD to strengthen democratic promotion during such thorny times.

2. Initiatives, Events, and Progresses

At the 2008 Ministerial Meeting of the United Nations Democracy Caucus in New York, the Portuguese Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Luis Amado, anticipated the Presidency's intention to grant a specific award – the **“Geremek Prize for outstanding Achievement on Democracy Promotion”** - in a tribute to the former polish Foreign Minister - for personalities with a particularly significant role in the field of Democracy and Human rights.

The Presidency decided to grant the Geremek Award to former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, 1993 Nobel Peace Prize co-winner, a revered figure in his country and all over the world, whose life has been courageously devoted to the fight for freedom, reconciliation and peace.

With a view to ensuring a more productive cooperation between Presidencies of the CG, reinforce continuity as well as the sustainability and coherence of undertaken activities, a **presidential Troika** was established – past, present and future presidencies.

The current Troika – Mali, Portugal, and Lithuania – had its first ministerial meeting in Lisbon, in January 2009, thus providing an opportunity to offer some political guidance to the preparations of the Lisbon ministerial.

The Troika endorsed the ministerial theme proposed by the Portuguese Minister for Foreign Affairs of Portugal, Dr. Luis Amado – “New challenges to Democratic Governance: the impact of the global economic and financial crisis”. With the purpose to guaranteeing more continuity between presidencies the Troika also recommended the establishment of regular Troika meetings every two years.

The Presidency hosted a **Seminar** including both components of the CD, the governmental and the non governmental, to assess the afore-mentioned theme thoroughly in the framework of the preparation of the July ministerial debate in Lisbon. Members of civil society and ONG’s from all around the world were invited to participate and provided a significant contribution to the Seminar’s Recommendations.

Both in Lisbon and in Washington the Presidency promoted the launching of the **Diplomatic Hand-Book**, a diversified “tool box of resources and assets” providing a useful and valuable working instrument for diplomats in nowadays interconnected world. This initiative represented a key output of the CoD and was another result of the successful cooperation between the governmental and nongovernmental branches of the CoD.

Building up on this central partnership, the Portuguese Presidency participated in some events promoted by the civil society, such as the International Steering Committee’s Conference on Democracy Education in Pocantico and the Jakarta Roundtable of the nongovernmental process of the CD.

The Presidency also strove for a more effective and operational **Convening Group**, thus enabling this CD's steering committee to work more productively.

With that aim the CG approved two important amendments to its Regulation Rules initially adopted in Santiago do Chile, April 30 2005. The first one enables the Troika to issue **Declarations** on behalf of the CG, concerning a specific country situation. The second one introduces a **rotation system** for the Group's composition thus adding to its geographical legitimacy as well as regional representativeness.

Another procedural improvement was the introduction of the **silence procedure** as a useful and quicker method for the CG's decision making.

The **Permanent Secretariat's budget** was also adopted by the CG thus enabling this organ to pursue the activities enshrined in its mandate. Specific financial contributions are to be pledged on a voluntary basis.

#### 4. Declarations

The CG issued two Declarations in Washington, the first one paying homage to former polish Minister Geremek on the occasion of his tragic passing and the second concerning the constitutional crisis in Honduras.

The CoD members gathered as the United Nations Democracy Caucus, issued two statements (2008 and 2009) concerning the elections for membership of the Human Rights Council reaffirming the commitments taken in the support of candidacies of countries contributing to the promotion of democracy and human rights as well as reiterating its belief in the importance of the composition of the HRC with respect to its credibility as a human rights body.

Also in New York the CG's Portuguese Presidency issued a Declaration on the first international Day of Democracy (September 15, 2008).