

1 July 2011

Vilnius Declaration

The Community of Democracies: Empowered, Energised, Engaged

We, the Participants in the Sixth Ministerial Conference of the Community of Democracies held in Vilnius on 1 July 2011:

Reaffirming our common adherence to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as other relevant international instruments, and the Warsaw Declaration of 27 June 2000 establishing the Community of Democracies,

Further reaffirming our commitment to respect and implement the provisions agreed to in previous Community of Democracies Ministerial Conferences,

Seeking to implement the decision of the Fifth Ministerial Conference (Lisbon, 2009), confirmed in the Act of Recommitment to the Warsaw Declaration adopted at the Community of Democracies High Level Democracy Meeting held in Krakow on 2-4 July 2010, to give a new impetus to the Community of Democracies and to make the Community more inclusive, transparent, efficient and relevant in promoting democratic governance globally,

Recognizing that the recent events in North Africa and the Middle East reflect a profound democratic transformation process that could have lasting consequences not only for the people and countries of the region but also for the rest of the world and expressing hope that these historic changes will lead to peaceful, democratic and prosperous societies,

Acknowledging our shared commitment to assisting those countries seeking guidance and support during democratic transition and in the consolidation of democracy,

Emphasizing the importance of development, economic, and social progress to peace, freedom, human rights protection, and democratic governance,

Further emphasising that an enabling legal environment for civil society organizations is an essential component of a sustainable democracy,

Condemning all acts of terrorism as one of the most grave threats to peace, security and democracy,

Stressing the important role of regional and international organizations, including the United Nations in the promotion of democratic governance thorough the world,

Have adopted the following:

1. We reaffirm our dedication to the continuous development and promotion of democracy in our countries and worldwide and intend to cooperate fully in an open, inclusive and transparent manner among ourselves and with all other stakeholders concerned.
2. We welcome the measures taken by the Community of Democracies under the Lithuanian Presidency in order to increase the efficiency, scope and activities of the Community and in particular we endorse a new governing structure of the Community of Democracies as prepared by its Working Group.
3. We seek to further focus and strengthen the Community of Democracies activities on assistance to countries facing threats to their democracy, coordinate our policies and activities to enhance the effectiveness of democratic governance.

To that end we:

- Endorse the Democracy Partnership Challenge, a Community of Democracies initiative aimed at providing a framework in which countries participating in the Community of Democracies can help other countries that are now in the process of transition to democracy, and pledge our support to the implementation of the action plans adopted with respect to the countries concerned (Liberia, Moldova, Tunisia, ...);

- Confirm our desire to cooperate in sharing experiences and identifying best practices in support to democratic transitions and consolidation of democracy worldwide.

4. We underline the important role of freely functioning, well-organized civil society in all countries and pledge our support to the strengthened involvement of civil society in the process of democratic governance at the local, national and international levels.

5. We condemn continued persecution of civil society activists in many countries around the world and strongly support the establishment of an objective, independent mechanism for monitoring repressive measures against civil society and non-governmental organizations. We actively support the promotion of the rights of every person, including members of civil society to the freedoms of expression, assembly and association. We encourage initiatives that provide technical training for civil society on the use of new technology to advance and enhance civil society's efforts.

6. We underline the importance of promoting education for democracy as a fundamental tool for participation in the democratic process.

7. We express our satisfaction with regard to recent activities of the Community in promoting the empowerment of women and their equal participation in all spheres of life. In this respect, we welcome the high level conference "Women Enhancing Democracy: Best Practices" held on the eve of our meeting in Vilnius.

8. We express our satisfaction with the strengthened role of the Community of Democracies at the United Nations. We intend to seek to enhance our engagement with the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Democracy Fund, and the Alliance of Civilizations, in supporting and promoting democratic governance.

9. We recognize the importance of reinforcing existing cooperation and coordination of our diplomatic efforts with and within other international and regional organizations, including the African Union, the Arab League, the Council of Europe, the European Union, the Organization American States, the Organization Islamic Conference and others, in order to support and promote democracy and democratic values.

10. We welcome the establishment of the Community of Democracies Parliamentary Forum for Democracy as a platform for parliamentarians to share best practices regarding democratization, to engage our governments, and support and strengthen the institution of parliaments around the world.

11. We also welcome active engagement of the Young Leaders Forum of the Community of Democracies, an official pillar within the Community launched during the Lithuanian Presidency, aiming to mobilize and strengthen international, regional and national youth organizations.

12. We underline the importance of the private sector in the development of a democratic society at national, regional and international levels and to that end, welcome the formal inauguration of the Corporate Democracy Forum as a pillar of the Community of Democracies which will gather business and business association representatives committed to the furthering of democracy through the strengthening of free markets, established as a follow-up to a recommendation made at the 2007 Bamako Ministerial.

13. We seek further implementation of reforms that promote sustainable development and poverty reduction and strengthen exchange of our relevant experiences and share information, including on available public and private sources of funding for development assistance and poverty reduction. We underline the importance of building partnerships between government, the private sector and civil society.

14. We support the continued the work the Community of Democracies through issue-specific working groups as an important mechanism for implementing concrete initiatives that promote democracy

15. We pledge our full support to the incoming Mongolian Presidency of the Community of Democracies.