



## **INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION**

**OFFICE OF THE PERMANENT OBSERVER TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

### **2007 Meeting of the International Conferences of New or Restored Democracies**

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PRESENTATION by Ambassador Anda Filip  
Permanent Observer of the Inter-Parliamentary Union

Minister Al-Rumaihi,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure and an honour for me to join you today for the 2007 Meeting of the International Conferences of New or Restored Democracies. At the outset, I would like to commend the efforts of the State of Qatar to ensure systematic follow-up to the recommendations of a very successful 6<sup>th</sup> ICNRD Conference one year ago in Doha.

The purpose of our meeting today is to discuss how best we can increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the ICNRD Movement. This is a question which we have given some thought to earlier this year when the IPU convened an expert seminar on the past, present and future of the new or restored democracies movement. The meeting took place in Stockholm at the invitation of the Swedish Parliament and was a joint effort by the IPU and the United Nations, which brought together a representative group of experts, from the ICNRD host countries, the United Nations, academics and civil society.

With your permission, Mr. President, I would like to share a few of the ideas that emerged from this meeting. Let me start with restating a few basic but very important points which were made at the meeting in Stockholm.

The first of these is that democracy must necessarily grow from within a country; it must be locally owned; it can never be imposed and should not be directed from abroad. The role of the international community - including that of the NRD movement - should be to provide support and assistance in the advancement of universally recognized values.

It follows from this that the NRD should follow a bottom-up approach. It should not try to prescribe solutions and naming and shaming may not necessarily be the best approach. Constructive engagement and an inclusive approach should therefore be emphasized.

The second point that was made is that the NRD movement should continue to serve as a forum for exchanging experiences, good practices and expertise. It is not a technical agency. Its primary role should be to act as a catalyst and stimulate action by others. At the same time, the NRD movement is a continuous process. Hence, there is a need to plan for and carry out work in between the conferences. I will revert to this point in a few moments.

The third basic point is that the NRD movement should strive to be less *ad hoc* in character, although not necessarily very formalistic. There may, for example, be virtue in preparing a guide/rules book for all participants at future NRD Conferences explaining clearly how the event functions, what possibilities for participation exist, how outcome documents are prepared and what opportunities participants have to influence their content.

And since I am here on the subject of future ICNRD conferences, let me say that we believe that we should continue striving for greater integration between the three components of the NRD. At the conferences, this would mean more interaction between them with a possibility for all to have access to all public meetings, possibility for representatives of the different components to be represented at sessions of the drafting committees of the other components and with a joint statement to be issued by the three components.

Moreover, future conferences may also wish to draw inspiration from the world economic forum otherwise known as the "Davos meetings." Specifically, part of future ICNRD conferences could be turned into a form of "market" place where democracy projects can be showcased and partnerships forged between different actors and donors.

Mr. President,

During the meeting in Stockholm and on subsequent occasions we have reiterated how important it is that the NRD movement carries out activities between the conferences. Such activities should seek to build on work already carried out by the movement itself and by others and to go deeper into issues. In other words, we should avoid duplication and not re-invent the wheel.

If that is the case, then a very useful starting point would be to map what is being done in the democracy field and by whom. This would constitute a very real contribution to achieving greater knowledge, a fundamental pre-requisite to action. Such a mapping exercise should include determining what databases

and research already exist and are publicly available in the democracy field. All of this information could then be stored and kept up-to-date in an NRD database on democracy actions and actors.

A second area where the NRD movements could make a unique contribution is in relation to democracy indicators. Mongolia set a very interesting example when it was hosting ICNRD-5. It developed national democratic governance indicators and country information notes. We suggest that other countries may wish to follow suit - why not the countries that are represented on the ICNRD Advisory Board for example - and similarly develop individual country-specific and locally owned self-assessments exercises on the basis of the Mongolian model. Such an exercise, supported by parliaments and civil society organizations, could set an example for many other countries that would be willing to measure and track their own performance as democracies.

In the same vein, the NRD movement could also look into the feasibility of setting up a reporting exercise in which States (with participation from the three components) provide information on steps they have put in place or policies they pursue to uphold commitments already made in the context of the ICNRD process or more generally as part of State compliance with international human rights norms. Alternatively, a mechanism could be set up whereby a team of experts draft brief country papers describing national democracy policies and plans by drawing on existing sources of information;

Incidentally, pursuing this type of work in relation to democracy indicators and reporting exercises, would allow us to showcase the unique tri-partite nature of the NRD movement - government, parliament and civil society - and their ability to work constructively together. Cooperation in projects carried out at the national and regional level would set the movement apart from other exercises and serve as a good practise to be emulated by others.

A third area of possible future action is in relation to definitions and statements regarding the meaning of democracy. As we all know there are many of them and it may be worth identifying and pulling them together into a single collection. Depending on our ambition, we may eventually envisage turning them into a single comprehensive statement, declaration or convention under UN auspices. Before we get there, however, we should know what exists which is as good a reason as any to start by identifying the work that has already been done.

When we do, we will find, I am sure, that there is a broad consensus on what is meant by democracy. There is undeniably a very clear and direct relationship between democracy, human rights, peace and security and democracy is not limited to civil and political rights. Democracy is equally related to economic and social development, with sustainable development and the protection of the environment, and with people's security. What's more, democracy also has its

place in international relations which suffers from its own democracy gap and the effects of globalisation.

Mr. President,

The meeting in Stockholm addressed a whole range of issues and I will not dwell on all of them. Some of them are of a more technical nature and relate for example to how best to raise visibility for the NRD movement and to anchor the movement at the national and local levels. Let me add one more thought however. And that is in regard to the relationship between the NRD movement and the United Nations.

I think we all agree that the United Nations and its agencies should continue to assume a supportive role to the NRD movement, and the United Nations should continue to serve as a focal point for developing a normative framework for democracy. The UN Secretary-General's report is a useful vehicle for sharing knowledge of the work that is carried out in the field of democracy and could usefully include information from a broad range of regional and other organizations in the democracy field. I think we also want to see a higher level of the debate in the General Assembly by planning much further ahead, inviting a few ministers and "personalities", and organizing one or more parallel events. The UNGA resolution on new or restored democracies could also gradually evolve.

Mr. President,

Before concluding my remarks I would like to raise two more issues which play a significant part of the normative work carried out in the Inter-Parliamentary Union on democracy issues and which could gain from being higher on your agenda in the United Nations.

As some of you may know, ten years ago the members of our organization adopted by consensus a *Universal Declaration on Democracy*. The event took place on the occasion of the 98<sup>th</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Conference in Cairo, Egypt, in September 1997, and we recently celebrated its ten-year anniversary at the latest IPU Assembly in Geneva.

On that occasion Speakers Baleka Mbete of South Africa, Nino Burdjanadze of Georgia and Ahmed Fathy Sorour of Egypt joined other prominent parliamentary leaders to express their commitment to this unique instrument. The Declaration is the fruit of the concerted efforts of experts and parliamentarians representing a cross section of religions, cultures and civilizations. It doesn't belong to any one region. It draws inspiration from all and represents a statement to which political leaders in parliament from all regions find common ground.

The text contains three parts. It starts by affirming that democracy is a universally recognized ideal as well as a goal, which is based on common values shared by peoples throughout the world community irrespective of cultural, political, social and economic differences.

Democracy is both an ideal to be pursued and a mode of government to be applied according to modalities which reflect the diversity of experiences and cultural particularities without derogating from internationally recognized principles, norms and standards.

As an ideal, democracy aims essentially to preserve and promote the dignity and fundamental rights of the individual, to achieve social justice, foster economic and social development of the community, and strengthen peace and cohesion in society. The achievement of democracy hence also presupposes a genuine partnership between men and women in the conduct of affairs of society.

A state of democracy ensures that the processes by which power is acceded to, wielded and alternates, allow for free political competition, and are the product of open, free and non-discriminatory participation by the people, exercised in accordance with the rule of law.

Democracy is of course based on the existence of well-structured and well-functioning institutions, as well as on a body of standards and rules and on the will of society as a whole, fully conversant with its rights and responsibilities, and the declaration enumerates many of them in its second part. Not surprisingly, the declaration affirms that democracy is founded on the right of everyone to take part in the management of public affairs and that it therefore requires, in particular, a parliament in which all components of society are represented and which has the requisite powers and means to express the will of the people by legislating and holding government to account.

The third and last part of the declaration sets out the international dimension of democracy and affirms that democracy must also be recognized as an international principle, applicable to international organizations and to States in their international relations.

From the perspective of the IPU and the Universal Declaration on Democracy I have just described to you, it is meaningful that the International Day of Democracy - 15 September - which has been adopted by the General Assembly, also coincides with the anniversary of the day when the Universal Declaration on Democracy was adopted.

As far as the International Day of Democracy is concerned, it is no longer the property of the ICNRD. It belongs to us all – the United Nations, its member States, the peoples and citizens of this world – and the IPU looks forward to engaging with national parliaments as well as with all interested stake-holders, in

thinking about and determining how this day can best be marked, in an appropriate and meaningful way.

Mr. President,

During the ten years since the declaration was adopted, the IPU has worked with parliaments in all corners of the world to implement its provisions and particularly those that addresses parliaments. Last year, IPU's main contribution to the Sixth International Conference on New or Restored Democracies was a Guide to good practice entitled "*Parliament and Democracy in the Twenty-first Century*".

This study is an ambitious attempt to identify the core values of a democratic parliament, and is based on experiences and good practices from some seventy parliaments around the world – East and West, North and South – of how they are actually putting these values into practice.

For those of you who are interested, we have placed some copies of the Guide on the tables at the side of the room. You will see that it is structured in five main chapters: (1) a representative parliament, (2) a parliament that is open and transparent, (3) an accessible parliament, (4) a parliament that is accountable and (5) an effective parliament – at the national level, but also in terms of its involvement in international affairs.

Based on the findings included in this Guide and as part of its normative work, developing criteria and standards for democratic practice, the IPU will be devoting quite a bit of attention in the months to come to the question of representation (including of minority and indigenous groups) in national parliament.

In conclusion, the IPU looks forward to working closely with the NRD movement and mobilizing the global parliamentary community in support of democracy worldwide.

I thank you for your attention.