EXPERT SEMINAR ON THE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE OF THE NEW OR RESTORED DEMOCRACIES MOVEMENT

<u>SUMMING UP BY THE CHAIR</u>

> *The following are the main conclusions and recommendations of the expert seminar on the past, present and future of the new or restored democracies movement (NRD) that took place in the Swedish Parliament (Riksdagen), Stockholm, on 15 and 16 March 2007. The meeting, which was a joint initiative of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the United Nations, was hosted by the Swedish Parliament and received the support of the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The recommendations are meant to assist the government of the State of Qatar in its task as Chair of the Advisory Board and the country in charge of following up the results of the 6th International Conference of New or Restored Democracies (ICNRD-6).*
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> *The recommendations are also meant to assist the three components of the NRD (governments, parliaments and civil society) in pursuing a coherent and more effective approach to follow-up of the ICNRD.*

<u>General</u>
- 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 advancement of universally recognized values;
- There is an undeniable relationship between democracy on the one hand and human rights, peace and security on the other;
- Overall, 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 inclusive approach should be emphasized;
- 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;
- The NRD movement is a continuous process; hence, the need to plan for and carry out work throughout the years between conferences; it could usefully learn from the experience of others, such as the Community of Democracies, which have built up mechanisms to carry out work between sessions, through expert working groups;
- The NRD movement should strive to be less *ad* hoc in character, yet not necessarily very formalistic; having said that, there may 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;
- It is also important to continue striving for greater integration between the three components of the NRD; at conferences, this should mean more inter-action between them; the next conference could usefully have (i) possibility for all to have access to all

public meetings; (ii) possibility for representatives of the different components to be represented at sessions of the drafting committees of the other components; (iii) joint statement of three components;

- Self-developed codes of conduct for civil society organisations are welcome and would contribute to ever greater legitimacy for these organisations and enhance trust with governments and parliament in the advancement of the democracy agenda;
- New actors may be integrated within the movement. For instance, the judiciary and local government institutions have been absent from the NRD; regional agencies and organisations could also play a more active role;
- The inclusiveness of the NRD should be encouraged and its work should include not only young democracies but also the older democracies;
- The mechanism set up for follow-up to ICNRD-6 (Advisory Board and locally run Secretariat) is a welcome first step towards giving more concrete content to follow-up.

Networking and cooperation
- There is a need to increase networking between sessions of the NRD; holding virtual meetings could usefully be explored;
- The periodic briefings in New York could be continued; Similarly, the practice set in motion by the Romanian ICNRD hosts to arrange for inter-action by visiting eminent personalities with the UN community in New York on democracy issues could also be continued;
- The three components of the NRD movement could try to work together as closely as possible between conferences as well; 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; areas where such co-operation could be most useful include countries where democracy is under threat or which are just emerging from conflict;
- Some of the democracy practitioners, such as International IDEA, could usefully be drawn closer to the NRD movement; it could offer advise, experience and research as well as collaboration in specific projects;
- Cooperation with other actors outside the movement would also be useful but probably much harder to achieve given differences in mandates and working methods; at a minimum, however, there should be inter-action, dialogue, and systematic exchange of information and experiences between these entities; emphasis should be placed on avoiding duplication;
- The NRD movement could devote some time and effort to ensuring closer cooperation with regional organizations; it could usefully exchange views on this subject with the Community of Democracies which has set up a working group to examine this issue;

Visibility
- It is of paramount importance to ensure much greater better visibility to the work of the NRD movement; the movement may wish to enlist the services of professional consultants to draw up a comprehensive information and communication strategy;
- All the components of the NRD movement should use their channels of communications to publicize the democracy work; that includes the myriad of activities carried out by civil society organizations and parliaments; the IPU should make the best use possible of the tenth anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Democracy; the various components could envisage commissioning an information strategy;

- The ICNRDs could emulate the example of the annual "Davos meetings" and part of the conferences could be turned into a form of "market" place where democracy projects can be showcased and partnerships forged between different actors and donors;
- The various components of the NRD should devote more attention to promoting ownership of the NRD within their respective constituencies and thus encouraging them to follow-up on ICNRD recommendations;
- Efforts should be made also to promote local-level awareness of democracy values: human rights, rule of law, women's empowerment, etc.

ICNRD-7
- It is urgent to identify the host for ICNRD-7 as soon as possible so that planning for that event can start forthwith;
- Every host has had a democracy message that grows out of its own (and the region's) particular democratization process(es) and which needs to be integrated into the work of the NRD movement over the next three years; the host region of the ICNRD should feel its positive impact on democratic development in the region.

Future work programme
- The State of Qatar's generous offer and commitment to support financially NRD activities until ICNRD-7 is greatly appreciated;
- Programme of activities must be both practical and realistic; it should be doable and achievable;
- Emphasis should be placed on building on work already carried out by the movement itself and by others and go deeper into issues; in other words, avoid duplication and re-inventing the wheel;
- Hence, a useful starting point would be to map what is being done in the democracy field and by whom; this should include determining what databases and research already exist and are publicly available in the democracy field;
- It may be useful to build database(s) (or link existing ones) with information on democracy actors and include details of the work they carry out;
- Future work is also needed in relation to democracy indicators; emphasis could usefully be placed on promoting individual country-specific and locally owned self-assessments exercises on the basis of the Mongolian model (development of national democratic governance indicators and country information notes); each country represented on the ICNRD Advisory Board could be invited to undertake such democracy assessment with the help of CSOs and parliaments in those countries, in order to set the example for emulation by others;
- 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 (4-5 pages) country papers describing national democracy policies and plans by drawing on existing sources of information;
- The Advisory Board may wish to consider setting up one or more working groups to look deeper into some of these issues and prepare more detailed recommendations for possible action by the movement;

- The Advisory Board may also wish to explore setting up "programme or scientific" committees or working groups which would be composed of individuals from within and outside the UN system (academia for example) and which could be helpful in exploring issues and charting possible courses of action for the Board;
- The host secretariat should maintain close contact with the three components of the movement and be mandated to carry out programmes and projects established by the Advisory Board. It should also consider as a matter of urgency the publication of the report on ICNRD-6.
- For purposes of greater effectiveness and efficiency and promoting greater ownership of NRD by members, careful thought should be given to future funding of the movement's activities and a report presented to ICNRD-7.

Relations with the United Nations
- The NRD process should do whatever it can to encourage the UN System as a whole and its Secretary-General to be more pro-active on democracy issues; the Chair of the Advisory Board can play a particularly useful and important role;
- An annual meeting should be carefully prepared between the UNS-G and the Chair of the Advisory Board to advance the cause of democracy at the United Nations;
- The UNGA debate on democracy could usefully be turned into a higher level debate by planning much further ahead, inviting a few ministers and "personalities", and organizing one or more parallel events (including possibly by making it coincide with a civil society meeting and/or parliamentary hearing in New York);
- The UNGA resolution on new or restored democracies could also evolve; however, radical innovations are to be avoided and any improvements in the text should be gradual;
- The UN Secretary-General's report and (possibly to a lesser extent) the UNGA resolution could serve as a useful vehicle for sharing knowledge of and promoting the work of certain regional and other organizations in the democracy field;
- Democracy could be turned into a ninth millennium development goal (MDG-9), like has been done in Mongolia;
- The UN and its agencies should continue to provide a supportive role to NRD; the UN should continue to serve as a focal point for developing a normative framework for democracy.

The meaning of democracy
- There are already many international definitions and statements regarding the meaning of democracy; it may be worth identifying them and pulling them together into a single collection; eventually, one may envisage turning them into a single comprehensive statement, declaration or convention under UN auspices;
- There is an intrinsic link between democracy and human rights; promoting respect for the rule of law and gender equality should be primary objectives for the NRD movement; Similarly, it should encourage the creation of national human rights commissions and human rights action plans and programmes;
- 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 is required therefore is a comprehensive approach to human rights;
- Democracy should be promoted nationally but also internationally; there is a need to address the democracy gap in international relations and the effects of globalisation on democracy.

Other important issues
- There is a need to clarify the role that the NRD can assume in regard to countries where democracy may be under threat; the different components of the NRD process could provide assistance in support of local actors in those countries to help them in their efforts to restore and strengthen democracy; one could also envisage a mechanism whereby the Chair of the Advisory Board could make public statements on behalf of the NRD movement;

Geneva, 30 March 2007