



First Meeting of the Inter-Regional Dialogue on Democracy

Press Statement

(Washington DC, USA, 15 April 2011)

1. The First Meeting of the Inter-Regional Dialogue on Democracy was held on 14-15 April 2011 at the headquarters of the Organization of American States in Washington DC, USA. The Meeting, which was hosted by Mr. Jose Miguel Insulza, Secretary-General of the Organization of American States (OAS), was attended by Mr. Jean Ping, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Mr. Tuiloma Neroni Slade, Secretary-General of the Pacific Islands Forum and Mr. Vidar Helgesen, Secretary-General of International IDEA. Ms. Fathimath Dhiyana Saeed, Secretary-General of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) participated as an observer. Representatives of the Secretary-General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the President of the European Commission and the Secretary-General of the League of Arab States also participated in the Meeting.
2. The Heads and the Representatives of the Regional Organizations and the Secretary-General of International IDEA officially launched the Inter-Regional Dialogue on Democracy, which will serve as a platform for engagement among Regional Organizations on democracy and related issues. This initiative draws on existing cooperation between and among Regional Organizations and International IDEA and builds on the spirit of the January 2010 Retreat convened by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon to promote inter-regional cooperation.
3. Recognizing that the individual and joint experiences of the Regional Organizations constitute a unique and valuable resource that needs to be further harnessed, they affirmed their commitment to continue, enhance and expand their cooperation, taking into account the differences in mandates, context, character and capacity among the regional organizations.
4. There was an open discussion on key developments and challenges to strengthen democracy in their respective regions. They also discussed the role their organizations play in support of democracy building, within their mandates.

5. The Meeting noted the progress of ratification of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance. They congratulated the African Union on the successful conclusion of the Sixteenth Ordinary Session Debate of the Assembly of the African Union on the theme, "Towards Greater Unity and Integration through Shared Values", which reaffirmed the need for convergence between governance and democracy as a catalyst to Africa's political, economic and social integration. They welcomed the establishment of the African Governance Architecture, which is a framework for dialogue between key actors in consolidating democracy and promoting good governance. The Meeting commended the AU for its firm commitment to equal representation between men and women.

6. The Meeting noted the progress of implementation of the ASEAN Charter; in particular its continuing efforts to strengthen democracy, enhance good governance and the rule of law and promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Meeting also recognized the important role of the ASEAN Political Security Community Blueprint as the region moves toward an ASEAN Community by 2015. The Meeting welcomed the establishment of the ASEAN Inter-Governmental Commission of Human Rights and the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children.

7. The Meeting noted the progress of implementation as of November 2010 of the Council Conclusions on Democracy Support adopted on 18 November 2009 and the EU Agenda for Action on Democracy Support in EU External Relations. They welcomed the EU's intention to intensify international cooperation on democracy building, including dialogue with Regional Organizations such as this Meeting.

8. The Meeting took note of the Tunis Declaration issued in the 16th Arab Summit (2004), which called for Reform, Modernization and Democratization in the Arab World. It also took note of the revised Arab Human Rights Charter and the creation of the Pan-Arab Parliament. The Meeting further recognized the central role that the League of Arab States played and continues to play in addressing developments in their region.

9. The Meeting recognized the commitments in the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' Vision (2004) to seek a region respected for the quality of its governance and the full observance of democratic values and progress being made to bolster the governance pillar of the Pacific Plan (2005). They also congratulated the Pacific Islands Forum on the celebration of its 40th Anniversary (1971-2011), including the launching of its Pacific Leaders Lecture Series, which will be an important opportunity to highlight key governance and democratic challenges being addressed in the Pacific.

10. The Meeting congratulated the Organization of American States on its 10th Anniversary of the Inter-American Democracy Charter for its continued effort to promote democracy in the region by making the Charter an active instrument for ensuring free and fair elections, strengthening democratic institutions and upholding human rights. In addition, the Meeting recognized that over the years, the Organization has played an important role in conflict prevention and resolution among its member states. The Meeting welcomed the willingness of the OAS to share its experience with other Regional Organizations.

11. The Meeting welcomed the adoption of the SAARC Charter on Democracy, the first such instrument in the region, which outlines the commitments of SAARC Member States in strengthening democratic values, institutions and processes in the region.

12. The Meeting agreed on the importance of close cooperation among Regional Organizations given common challenges and opportunities that face the regions on democracy building. They endorsed the following topics for specific activities that would be undertaken by the Inter-Regional Dialogue on Democracy:

- (a) The Integrity of Elections
- (b) Practices to Promote Transparency and Accountability
- (c) Enhancing Participation in the Political Processes
- (d) Strengthening Constitutionalism, Rule of Law, Separation of Powers and Independence of the Judiciary

In all of these activities, the issue of women's participation and representation will be addressed. Special attention on diversity and the role of minorities will also be ensured.

13. The Meeting noted that Regional Organizations have a role in promoting and protecting the integrity of elections. The Meeting agreed to share experiences across regions to enhance the effectiveness of electoral observation, including exploring the feasibility of inter-regional electoral observation missions, as appropriate.

14. The Meeting took note of the developments in the Arab World and welcomed the democratic processes in the region.

15. The Meeting also welcomed the launching of the Inter-Regional Democracy Resource Centre at International IDEA and its website: <http://www.idea.int/democracdialog>. The Resource Centre will serve as the full-

time Secretariat of the Inter-Regional Dialogue on Democracy and will thereby facilitate inter-regional exchange of information and experiences.

16. Finally, the Meeting agreed to continue the constructive dialogue among the Heads of Regional Organizations that was initiated today on the occasion of the Second Inter-Regional Dialogue on Democracy, which will be held in 2012.
