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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Letter dated 15 May 2013 from the Permanent Representative of Mongolia to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the President of the Human Rights Council

I have the honour to forward herewith the conclusions of the Seventh Ministerial Conference of the Community of Democracies, held in Ulaanbaatar, on 29 April 2013, entitled "Ulaanbaatar Declaration: Community's attainments and Global Challenges" (see annex).

The participants in the Conference reaffirmed the conviction that democracy is the best known form of government to promote and protect human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law for all, to strengthen peace and to promote prosperity.

I should be grateful if you would circulate the present letter and the annex thereto* as documents of the twenty-third session of the Human Rights Council.

(*signed*) Luvsantseren Orgil
Ambassador, Permanent Representative

* Circulated as received, in the language of submission only.

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Annex

[English only]

Ulaanbaatar Declaration Community's Attainments and Global Challenges

We the Participants of the Seventh Ministerial Conference of the Community of Democracies held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, on 29 April 2013;

Reaffirming our unwavering commitment and adherence to the purposes and principles of the Warsaw Declaration of 27 June 2000 establishing the Community of Democracies and subsequent Ministerial decisions of the Community of Democracies,

Reiterating our obligations under the United Nations Charter and our common allegiance to the principles and spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and, as appropriate, other relevant international instruments,

Reaffirming that democracy, development and respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms are interdependent and mutually reinforcing,

Reiterating also our conviction that democracy is the best known form of government to promote and protect human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law for all, and to strengthen peace as well as to promote prosperity,

Recognizing that human rights, democracy and the rule of law are strengthened when States work to eliminate discrimination of any kind and strive to ensure the full participation of women on equal terms with men in all spheres of political, social and economic life,

Stressing the importance of ensuring that government is transparent, responsive, effective and accountable to the people, and that everyone tangibly benefits from free and open societies that embrace democratic institutions, respect for the individual, tolerance of diversity, pluralism, and the rule of law,

Reaffirming the important role played by individual citizens and civil society in decision making and policy formulation, and in improving the quality, legitimacy and effectiveness of democracies,

Expressing appreciation for the positive democratic trends in many parts of the world since the Vilnius Ministerial Conference held in 2011, including an increasing number of free and fair elections,

Welcoming the growing respect for democratic values in many parts of the world, including the initial steps taken in Northern Africa and the Middle East as well as the beginnings of political transition in Myanmar,

Noting with concern, however, the decline in the promotion and protection of social and political rights and civil liberties as well as the restrictions placed on individuals and civil society and the freedoms of expression, association, religion and belief in some countries,

Expressing concern for the democratic development of Mali has been seriously threatened by non-democratic forces and terrorist groups and reiterating the Community of Democracies' resolve to support the return to a pluralistic and stable democracy governed by the rule of law in Mali through inclusive national dialogue and long-term reconciliation,

Acknowledging the important role of the United Nations as well as regional and non-governmental organizations in democratic development, and other initiatives past and present that support and promote democracy and democratic values throughout the world,

Mindful of the role of international cooperation in promoting the goals set forth in the Warsaw Declaration and other international documents and commitments, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and convinced that in this field the Community of Democracies can play an important role in such cooperation and exchange of experience as well as through the provision of peer support,

Recalling that equality between men and women and the protection and promotion of women's rights are an integral part of human rights and a fundamental criterion of democracy,

Have adopted the following:

1. *We reaffirm* our resolve to advance democracy in our countries and worldwide, helping bridge the gap between principles and practice and, to that end, to cooperate in an open, inclusive and transparent manner with relevant national and international stakeholders within our respective countries as well as among ourselves and other international stakeholders.

2. *We reaffirm* our continued commitment to the CD reform process, initiated under the Lithuanian Presidency, and welcome the institutional reforms of the CD advanced under Mongolia's Presidency, as decided by the Vilnius Ministerial Conference in 2011, including the establishment of the first Governing Council and Executive Committee, the appointment of the Community's first Secretary-General and the institutionalization of its Permanent Secretariat. These basic institutional structures are contributing to the development of the CD into a dynamic coalition able to take real action to strengthen democracy and civil society worldwide.

3. *We commend* the concrete actions undertaken by the Presidency in promoting education for democracy, and will work together to promote the full and meaningful implementation of the United Nations General Assembly resolution A/RES/67/18 on Education for Democracy, which would contribute to the strengthening of democratic society and institutions, the realization of human rights and the achievement of the MDGs. We further commend to the attention of all CD member states the action plan contained in the International Steering Committee's Charlottesville Declaration on Creating a Culture of Democracy through Education (CCD).

4. *We applaud* the concrete actions taken by the Community's *working groups* since the Vilnius Ministerial Conference in support of the Community of Democracies' objectives, including:

- Enabling and protecting civil society by coordinating diplomatic action to prevent and address the adoption of laws and regulations that unduly restrict the work of civil society;
- Establishing the Leadership Engaged in New Democracies (LEND) Network and its Working Group - a digital platform for sharing best practices, peer-to-peer exchanges, and information on reform and the rule of law with those leaders guiding democratic transitions;
- Streamlining the activities of the Working Group on Education for Democracy to focus on practical actions, such as organizing international seminars, developing curriculum framework, establishing a new digital library of democracy education curricula and materials.

5. *We also welcome* other activities by the Community, including:

- Organizing the International Women's Leadership Forum in Ulaanbaatar on 7-8 July 2012;
- Convening the first informal Asia-Pacific Ministerial Meeting in Ulaanbaatar on 28 April 2013, at which the Ministers decided to regularly hold such a meeting in the margins of the CD Ministerial Conferences;
- Launching an Asian network for democracy to consolidate regional civil society activities and strengthening democratic gains in Asia;
- Promoting regional and country-to-country dialogue, cooperation and exchange of experiences in democratic development;
- Continued meetings of the UN Democracy Caucus that addressed issues such as democracy education, the rule of law, and democracy support;
- Successfully implementing the first round of the Democracy Partnership Challenge Task Forces for Tunisia and Moldova;
- Initiating the process to apply for an observer status with the United Nations General Assembly;
- Recognition of the Parliamentary Forum for Democracy, established under the Lithuanian Presidency, as an affiliated body of the Community of Democracies;
- Holding the first meeting of a Group of Friends of the Community of Democracies in Bamako with the aim of supporting Mali's return to democratic order;
- Establishing an Ad Hoc Group for Myanmar to support that country's transition towards democracy;
- Supporting effective cooperation with civil society to improve the transparency, accountability, legitimacy and performance of democratic governments.

6. *We welcome* the concrete and practical outcomes of the fora of the five pillars of the CD, namely, parliamentary, civil society, women, youth and the corporate fora, held in Ulaanbaatar on 27-28 April, which addressed the challenges and opportunities in promoting and consolidating democratic reforms, including means of harnessing open governance for democracy, and addressing the issues of more effectively fighting against corruption. These fora also provided an opportunity to share experiences and chart further cooperative measures, including those related to tackling the issues of open government, transparency, democratic governance and support for emerging democracies. Their input to this Ministerial conference, annexed to this Declaration, is greatly appreciated and lays the basis for further concrete actions of the CD in cooperation with its pillars.

7. *We resolve* to further increase and strengthen the activities of the Community of Democracies in support of greater democratic governance in our countries as well as in promoting and protecting democratic values in countries where democracy faces challenges.

To this end we:

- Support the activities of the pillars of the CD in promoting transparent and accountable democratic governance in addressing, where necessary, the challenges to such governance and promoting human rights and freedom;
- Work together to emphasize human rights, fundamental freedoms and democratic governance as integral parts of inclusive development and the eradication of extreme

poverty as the international community works to formulate the post-2015 development framework;

- Provide support to countries undergoing transitions to democracy to facilitate the emergence of democratic societies defined by good governance, protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as respect for the rule of law as stated in resolution 19/35 of the United Nations Human Rights Council;
- Support and defend an enabling environment for civil society, including through the adoption of legislation that does not put undue restrictions on civil society in all nations;
- Resolve to protect and promote freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, religion and belief and provide support to those whose rights are being denied or infringed upon, emphasizing that human rights including freedom of expression apply online as well as offline;
- Improve international observations of elections so as to ensure the transparent and genuine expression of the will of people and, if needed, offer recommendations for improving the integrity and effectiveness of electoral and related processes without interfering in the election processes;
- Support the strengthened role of the Community of Democracies at the United Nations by:
    - Encouraging the UN Democracy Caucus to take a leading role in supporting the goals of the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Community of Democracies Warsaw Declaration in the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council and other relevant UN bodies;
    - Supporting the work of the UN special mechanisms on issues relating to democracy and human rights, particularly the UN Special Rapporteurs on the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and the situation of human rights defenders;
    - Developing closer cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Democracy Fund, other relevant UN bodies and the UN Alliance of Civilizations.
- Promote the goals of empowering of women and their full participation in all spheres of political, social and economic life as well as fighting gender-based violence;
- Promote further cooperation and coordination of efforts between the Community of Democracies and international and regional organizations, and initiatives such as the Open Government Partnership;
- Redouble our efforts to include civil society views in all aspects of the Community of Democracies, to provide support to the nongovernmental International Steering Committee, and to support civil society in all countries in the world;
- Explore the benefits of transforming the Community of Democracies towards a fully-fledged international organization.

8. *We welcome* the new Presidency of El Salvador and express our commitment to support and assist El Salvador in leading multi-stakeholder efforts to protect, strengthen and advance democracy and democratic values in our countries and beyond.

9. *We congratulate* Mongolia on its outstanding leadership of the Community of Democracies and its efforts to advance democracy and democratic values in the Asia-Pacific region and around the world. We also express words of gratitude to Mongolia for the successful hosting of the VII Ministerial Conference of the Community of Democracies in Ulaanba.