



General Assembly

Distr.: General
28 September 2009

Original: English

Sixty-fourth session

Agenda item 11

Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies

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Report of the Secretary-General*

Summary

The present report describes the efforts made by Member States, regional and intergovernmental organizations and the United Nations to strengthen programmes devoted to the promotion and consolidation of democracy, including through increased bilateral, regional and international cooperation, taking into account innovative approaches and best practices. The report also provides an account of how Member States, together with the United Nations and other organizations, marked the International Day of Democracy, which was celebrated for the first time on 15 September 2008. The report then reviews the assistance provided by the United Nations system to new or restored democracies in the field of democracy. Lastly, it discusses the cooperation and coordination between the United Nations and its international partners in the promotion of democracy and makes recommendations for further action.

* In view of the importance of the document, extensive consultations were undertaken, resulting in delayed submission.



I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 62/7, the General Assembly encouraged Governments to strengthen national programmes devoted to the promotion and consolidation of democracy, including through increased bilateral, regional and international cooperation, taking into account innovative approaches and best practices. The General Assembly also encouraged regional and other intergovernmental organizations to share their experiences in the field of democracy promotion with each other and with the United Nations system, where appropriate. The General Assembly further decided to observe, on 15 September of each year, the International Day of Democracy, with effect from its sixty-second session. The Assembly invited all Member States, organizations of the United Nations system, regional and intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and individuals to commemorate the International Day of Democracy in an appropriate manner that would contribute to raising public awareness.

2. In the same resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session on the implementation of the resolution. The present report is submitted in compliance with that request.

II. Follow-up to the Sixth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies

3. The Sixth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies was held in Doha from 29 October to 1 November 2006. It unanimously endorsed the Doha Declaration and Plan of Action and emphasized the importance of establishing credible follow-up mechanisms for effectively implementing its decisions. As such, the Conference agreed upon the following implementation mechanisms: (a) an Advisory Board to assist the Conference Chairman; (b) an annual high-level meeting of the Conference that would be convened at the same time as the General Assembly; and (c) a nucleus secretariat to assist the Chairman.

4. A notable achievement of the Sixth International Conference, under the Chairmanship of Qatar, was the establishment by the General Assembly of the International Day of Democracy on 15 September, as noted in General Assembly resolution 62/7 and celebrated for the first time in 2008.

5. As noted above, an important innovation of the Sixth International Conference was the establishment of an Advisory Board to assist the Chairman to implement the decisions of the Conference. The Board consists of eight members: five representatives from the regional groups (currently Egypt, Iceland, Mongolia, Romania and Uruguay); one participant from the Parliamentary Forum; one participant from the Civil Society Forum; and one representative from the United Nations. The Advisory Board has held four meetings since the convening of the Conference in Doha. The first was held in Doha on 26 April 2007; the second in New York on 28 September 2007; the third in Doha on 16 April 2008; and the fourth in New York on 8 June 2009. The decision to convene Advisory Board meetings in New York was made under Qatar's Chairmanship to enable participation at the level of United Nations permanent representatives. It is seen as a necessary step for the institutionalization of the New or Restored Democracies Movement.

6. In addition to the Advisory Board meetings, two expert group meetings have been held following the Sixth International Conference in order to move forward with the implementation of the Conference recommendations. The first expert group meeting, held on 17 April 2008, focused on studying means for coordination and information exchange in the field of democracy and agreed on the need to conduct research on the challenges facing the building of democracy. The second expert group meeting, held on 23 and 24 February 2009, focused on the establishment and development of national committees on democracy to facilitate and coordinate national-level actions aimed at promoting democracy and assisting in the achievement of the primary goals of the Conference. The experts agreed on the need to enhance coordination among members of the Movement but also raised questions relating to the mandate of such committees vis-à-vis the possible multiple activities being undertaken by national Governments to promote and strengthen democracy. This issue will be raised with the entire membership during subsequent meetings of the New or Restored Democracies Movement.

7. Following the Sixth International Conference, the Movement has considered various initiatives deemed necessary for its institutionalization, which is seen as crucial for its future and sustainability. Two key proposals were tabled in this regard by the Advisory Board, namely the creation of a secretariat in New York and the establishment of a Conference trust fund. Advisory Board members have noted that the establishment of a permanent secretariat in New York would provide proximity to member State delegations and technical and other services that would support the work of the Chair, including assisting with preparations for all meetings, the maintenance of the Conference website and electronic newsletter, organization of activities for the International Day of Democracy and other related activities. Members noted that the creation of a trust fund would relieve the Chairs of the financial burden their role entails and provide them with the support necessary for the implementation of activities of the Movement. A proposal for the establishment of the trust fund will be tabled at the upcoming meeting of the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies.

8. In addition to these key proposals, the current Chair, the Government of Qatar, has already taken a number of useful steps towards institutionalization of the New or Restored Democracies Movement. Firstly the Conference website¹ was established with a view to providing an important collection of documents and international website links on democracy, including access to an electronic newsletter. Secondly, in an effort to ensure wider dissemination of information on democracy, a databank was made available on the website with information collected through a questionnaire circulated to member States, parliaments and civil society organizations.

9. The United Nations has been involved in supporting the follow-up to the recommendations of the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies. The concept of country-led governance assessments stems from the outcome documents of the Fifth International Conference, the Ulaanbaatar Declaration and Plan of Action which call on Member States to develop their own databases of democratic governance indicators. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has since become the lead multilateral agency in supporting Member States

¹ See: www.icnrd.org.

to develop their own governance analysis and data.² It continues to support Mongolia in carrying out its pioneering work on its national Millennium Development Goal 9, which is a direct result of the Fifth International Conference.

III. International Day of Democracy

10. As noted above, the International Day of Democracy, established by the General Assembly in its resolution 62/7, was celebrated for the first time on 15 September 2008 and again on 15 September 2009.

A. Activities of Member States

11. To commemorate the first International Day of Democracy, the outgoing President of the General Assembly, Srgjan Kerim, in close collaboration with the Chair of the Sixth International Conference, the Government of Qatar, organized an informal session of the General Assembly on 15 September 2008. Speakers included the outgoing President of the General Assembly, the former President of Chile, Ricardo Lagos, who gave the keynote address, the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations (as the main sponsor of resolution 62/7), the Permanent Representative of Portugal to the United Nations (as Chair of the Community of Democracies) and the Secretary-General.

12. According to information provided by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the first International Day of Democracy was observed by 46 national parliaments. Events included the adoption of a resolution marking the day in Uruguay, television and radio programmes in Namibia, an “open doors” day in Indonesia, the organization of a seminar on the role of Parliament in Thailand’s political reform and an exhibition to promote concepts of democracy by Thailand and a special session of the Greek Parliament in Athens, which was attended by the then IPU President Pier Ferdinando Casini. Events that sought to bring the public, especially young people, into contact with parliament — such as an open doors day, a special debate or an exhibition — were among the most common forms of celebration. Thailand also designated 15 to 19 September 2008 as “Democracy Awareness Week”.

13. Many of the parliaments made use of information material provided to them by IPU, which included a poster and a leaflet, as well as a redesigned version of the Universal Declaration on Democracy of 1997. Nine parliaments announced that they would translate some or all of these documents into their national language.

14. The response of Member States, and particularly parliaments, to the invitation to celebrate the first International Day of Democracy was truly impressive. The challenge now is to sustain the momentum and encourage many more Member States to help make the International Day of Democracy an opportunity for the world to come together, increase awareness and engage in celebrating democracy.

² See: http://www.undp.org/oslocentre/flagship/democratic_governance_assessments.html.

B. Activities of the United Nations Secretariat

15. To mark the importance of the International Day of Democracy in 2008, the Secretary-General issued a statement noting the significance of such a day having been championed by countries which were themselves working hard every day to nurture and consolidate young democratic foundations. the Secretary-General also stated a commitment to ensure that the United Nations worked globally, wherever it could, to help people and nations everywhere build and strengthen democratic systems. In 2009 the Secretary-General issued another statement, which stressed that democratic principles were woven throughout the normative fabric of the United Nations and that, in the twenty-first century, democracy continued to be upheld as a universally relevant set of principles and an optimal social and political system.

16. Activities to commemorate the International Day of Democracy were carried out by the United Nations bodies listed below.

17. The Department of Public Information covered the General Assembly's observance of the day on 15 September 2008 and provided related press briefings, including through live television coverage, distributed to broadcasters around the world and posted on the Internet. The Department produced a press kit in Arabic, English and French with fact sheets highlighting the role of the United Nations in providing democracy assistance and the close link between human rights and democracy, electoral assistance and the role of women in promoting democracy. In addition, the Department launched a page on the United Nations website dedicated to the day in the six United Nations official languages. The page contains the statements the Secretary-General made to commemorate the days in all the official languages and provides links to related United Nations system activities.

18. The network of United Nations Information Centres actively promoted the day and undertook a wide range of activities, particularly in New Delhi, Lima, Lomé, Canberra, Islamabad, Ankara and Kyiv.

19. For the International Day of Democracy in 2009, the Department of Public Information actively worked with United Nations partners to update the day's website in the six official languages and to revise and update the relevant material and press kits that had been made available to the public.

20. To mark the first International Day of Democracy in 2008, the United Nations Democracy Fund hosted an information event to explain how the Fund operates and to hear from voices from the field undertaking projects with the assistance of the Fund. The Secretary-General addressed the special event alongside two members of the Fund's Advisory Board and civil society representatives reporting on projects in the field. To mark the International Day of Democracy in 2009, the Fund hosted an event which the Secretary-General also addressed. The event included a screening of the film *Please Vote For Me*, which portrays the story of eight-year-old students in a primary school in Wuhan, China, who elect a class monitor for the first time. The ensuing campaign and election portray a microcosm of democracy, warts and all. The film is part of a series of films called *Why Democracy?*, produced by STEPS International.

21. On 12 September 2008, just prior to the first International Day of Democracy, the Department of Political Affairs and UNDP, in close collaboration with

International IDEA, hosted a one-day round table to examine the nexus between democracy and development. The meeting sought to identify opportunities for multilateral action in the field of democracy assistance that can also enhance sustainable development processes. A second round table on “Democracy, peace and security: the role of the United Nations” is being planned for the second half of 2009 with the involvement of the Department of Political Affairs, UNDP and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, with the support of International IDEA.

22. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) observed the first International Day of Democracy by launching its biennial flagship publication *Progress of the World's Women 2008/09*. The report contains a framework for understanding accountability challenges from a gender perspective, showing how gender biases can distort the functioning of oversight institutions. These biases limit the potential impact of such institutions in ensuring that democracies respond adequately to women’s needs and protect women’s rights, according to the report, which sets out recommendations for institutional reform. The report demonstrates that women around the world have been improving the quality of democracies by changing the ways in which accountability is understood and built.

C. Activities of other organizations

23. At its Geneva headquarters, IPU held a panel discussion on 15 September 2008 to commemorate the International Day of Democracy, focusing on the broad theme of public participation embodied in the slogan “Your voice, your choice: together we can make democracy work”. Extracts from the event were webcast live and a special section on the day was created on the IPU website that included background information, a list of events organized by IPU and parliaments, a series of questions and answers, and an invitation to members of the public to give their views on the state of democracy.

24. For the International Day of Democracy in 2009, IPU activities were again focused on the broad theme of public participation in democracy, with the subtheme of democracy and political tolerance. The IPU was in regular touch with all parliaments in the lead up to 15 September 2009, drawing their attention to the International Day. It also prepared and distributed an information kit to assist parliaments in their preparations.

25. In September 2008, International IDEA organized a series of activities to highlight the link between democracy, development and diversity, including a joint action plan for democracy with the African Union to facilitate implementation of the African Charter on Democracy, a day of discussions and cultural performances in Stockholm together with Riksteatern, Sweden’s national touring theatre and UNDP, and the aforementioned joint round table with the Department of Political Affairs and UNDP in New York. In addition, on 15 September 2008, together with the Permanent Missions of Italy and Qatar to the United Nations, International IDEA organized a panel discussion on “Electoral processes and democracy-building: experiences from the Arab region”.

IV. Assistance provided by the United Nations system to new or restored democracies

26. At the World Summit in 2005 and reiterated in General Assembly resolution 62/7, Member States committed themselves to protecting and promoting human rights, the rule of law and democracy, recognizing that they are interlinked and mutually reinforcing and that they belong to the universal and indivisible core values and principles of the United Nations. Democratic principles are therefore woven throughout the normative fabric of the Organization and have been continually strengthened by the progressive adoption of international human rights norms and standards and resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

27. The evolution of these norms and standards has been matched by an ever greater operational activity on the ground, as demand for United Nations assistance with democracy-related issues such as institution-building, elections, rule of law and strengthening civil society continues to grow. Nevertheless, the challenges to consolidating democracy around the globe remain numerous: restoring or building new democracies, preserving fragile democracies, as well as improving the quality of the practice of democracy. This latter challenge is one from which no Member State is exempt.

28. The Secretary-General believes it is critically important that the United Nations system optimize its role in helping to build and strengthen democracies around the world, while never forgetting that the major responsibility for democratic change lies with forces within national societies. In that regard, the United Nations needs to actively and continually evaluate its efforts to ascertain how best to provide sustainable democracy assistance that builds national capacities and nurtures a democratic culture. It is also critical that coherence among the many United Nations initiatives in this area be improved. The Secretary-General is working with the relevant agencies and United Nations bodies to ensure that concrete measures are taken in this respect.

29. The Secretary-General is mindful that many still question the value of democracy and that there is a perception among some that democracy has failed to improve peoples' lives. This makes it all the more essential that the rationale of democracy promotion be explained. Experience has taught us that democracy is key to achieving the fundamental goals of promoting peace, human rights and development. Democratic institutions and practices are essential for fostering long-term security and stability because they facilitate peaceful political dialogue, contestation and resolution of differences, which create a conducive and legitimate environment for good and accountable governance and development and for meeting basic human needs and promoting and protecting human rights.

30. A key challenge for the United Nations is how to address political crises and prevent their escalation, wherever they may occur. In that regard, due attention should be given to ensuring appropriate collective responses to issues arising from unconstitutional changes in power.

31. United Nations assistance to new and restored democracies is wide in scope and multifaceted. This section provides some examples of how various departments, funds and programmes have been working in the fields of governance and democracy promotion.

32. With respect to electoral assistance, the United Nations continues to provide a wide variety of election-related technical assistance to requesting Member States as part of a system-wide endeavour. The Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs is the United Nations Focal Point for electoral assistance activities and has a mandate to ensure organizational coherence and political and technical consistency in all United Nations electoral activities, as reiterated in General Assembly resolution 62/150. A coordination mechanism has been established under the auspices of the Focal Point with relevant United Nations departments, agencies and programmes involved in electoral assistance.

33. Examples of recent electoral support provided by the Department of Political Affairs Electoral Assistance Division and others include: assistance to the 2009 presidential and provincial elections in Afghanistan, to be followed by parliamentary and local elections in the summer of 2010; assistance to parliamentary elections in December 2008 in Bangladesh, by providing support to its Election Commission; and support to electoral authorities in Guinea-Bissau for voter registration and the organization of legislative elections in 2008 and presidential elections in 2009. In 2008, assistance on planning, preparing and conducting Nepal's Constituent Assembly elections was also provided through the United Nations Mission in Nepal.

34. UNDP provides assistance to an election every three weeks on average, including by providing support such as strengthening the capacities of election management bodies, facilitating donor and aid coordination, fostering civic education and cooperation with the media, monitoring polling stations to prevent intimidation and other human rights violations and promoting participation in elections of the poorest social sectors, women, youth and indigenous peoples, as both voters and candidates. Some ongoing examples of such UNDP assistance can be found in the following countries: Angola, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, the United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. UNDP has also produced guidance notes and knowledge products and tools on different aspects of elections, such as electoral management, implementation guidelines, addressing electoral violence and human rights at the country level.

35. Peacekeeping missions deployed by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations also frequently include electoral components established in close coordination with UNDP and the Electoral Assistance Division, which also provide ongoing guidance on the work of such components.

36. Electoral support is also provided through the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Besides its work on guidelines for the analysis of electoral laws and procedures and public information activities relating to human rights and elections, OHCHR has been directly involved in the provision of technical assistance. For example, at the request of the Government, the OHCHR Country Office in Togo assisted in the organization of the October 2007 legislative elections by monitoring the human rights situation throughout the country before, during and after the elections.

37. In cooperation with UNDP, the United Nations Secretariat and national electoral authorities, the United Nations Volunteers programme (UNV) works as an additional implementing partner in supporting democratic electoral processes in post-conflict countries. The programme has played a key front-line role in nearly

every major United Nations-supported election since the early 1990s. In 2007 and 2008 it assisted with electoral support exercises in 23 different countries. As at July 2009, hundreds of its volunteers were working in 16 countries to provide technical advice to local electoral authorities and help with voter registration and civic education at the community level. Such activities are being carried out in Afghanistan, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sudan, and Timor-Leste.

Supporting constitution-making processes

38. Constitution-making processes are a central aspect of democratic transitions, peacebuilding and State-building. For the United Nations, constitution-making is a broad concept that covers the process of drafting a new constitution or reforming an existing one. Both processes are critical for the success of constitution-making, which presents moments of great opportunity to create a common vision of the future of a State, the results of which can have profound and lasting impacts on the peace and stability of a State. The United Nations has been involved in a number of constitution-making processes in recent years, including in Afghanistan, Iraq, Timor-Leste and other States. Constitutional assistance requires a combination of expertise that can be found in various departments and agencies, including the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Office of Legal Affairs, OHCHR and UNDP.

Supporting democracy through the promotion of human rights

39. The values of freedom and respect for human rights are essential elements of democracy. In turn, democracy provides the natural environment for the protection and effective realization of human rights. These values are embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and further developed in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

40. OHCHR provides input to global and regional actions for promoting democracy and human rights in cooperation with United Nations and regional organizations and also provides legal and substantive advisory assistance. In addition to assisting national actors and institutions involved in the administration of justice, efforts are also focused on enhancing the capacity of parliaments to promote and protect human rights. A first regional seminar for parliamentarians was held in South Africa in November 2007. The second is scheduled to take place in Panama in October 2009.

41. UNDP also helps new and restored democracies assess their laws and legal systems to determine whether they are in conformity with internationally recognized human rights standards of equality, non-discrimination and the participation of all people. Support for the promotion of human rights and access to justice, including to national human rights institutions, has been provided to Angola, Botswana, Ethiopia, Iraq, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

Strengthening democratic governance institutions and rule of law

42. One of the key elements of United Nations assistance to new and restored democracies is to help build and/or reform State institutions. This includes providing support for improving the transparency and accountability of

Governments, aiming at greater public involvement in decision-making processes and fostering judicial, legislative and administrative reforms.

43. In this context, references to good governance are included in the mandates of many missions led by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. The United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi, the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti and the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are tasked with the strengthening of democratic institutions and processes and the promotion of good governance. Moreover, processes to encourage inclusive national dialogue and reconciliation are included in the mission mandates of, inter alia, the United Nations Mission in the Sudan and the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste.

44. UNDP is particularly active in the area of public administration reform and anti-corruption initiatives, supporting programmes aimed at strengthening the capacities of public service institutions to improve service delivery in several countries including, inter alia, Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe. UNDP also provides assistance to anti-corruption institutions in support of the implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

45. UNDP has supported the work of one third of the parliaments in the world. For example, it is currently working in Mauritania to support the Parliament as the country emerges from the recent coup. UNDP has also worked with the parliaments in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Lebanon, the Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste. In the past year, UNDP has supported Pakistan and Bangladesh in the development of new programmes to support recently re-established parliaments.

46. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia has adopted human and institutional capacity-building initiatives as a key tool for building and strengthening State institutions. The Commission works on developing projects that aim to introduce a culture of participation, transparency and accountability within the public sector, based on good governance practices and principles. The Commission has also implemented capacity-building activities in crisis-affected areas, such as in Iraq and Palestine, as well as in Yemen, which have benefited public sector officials who are engaged in developing infrastructure necessary for the development of a democratic system.

Supporting women's empowerment

47. Empowering women and promoting women's rights is an integral part of United Nations democracy assistance, including by explicitly addressing gender discrimination that contributes to women's exclusion and the marginalization of their concerns. One of the Millennium Development Goals calls for promoting gender equality and empowering women. *The Millennium Development Goal Report 2008*³ notes that women are slowly gaining ground in political decision-making but that progress is erratic and marked by regional differences, adding that in one third of developing countries, women account for less than 10 per cent of parliamentarians.

³ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.08.I.18.

48. Through UNIFEM and others, the United Nations supports new and restored democracies by improving gender responsiveness in the context of elections and promoting women's political participation. Three areas of support are worth highlighting: capacity-building for women candidates and women elected officials; fostering improved accountability for gender equality; and promoting increased coverage and attention in the media to women in politics.

49. UNIFEM has strengthened the capacity of women to contest local and national elections in several countries, including in Ecuador, Indonesia, Nepal, Rwanda and Sierra Leone. It has also provided support to elected women leaders in Egypt, Kenya and Rwanda and, at the regional level, to the Arab Women Parliamentarians Forum, in order to strengthen their networking and policy analysis skills and improve their knowledge of parliamentary procedures.

50. Several missions led by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations have been involved in efforts to empower women to be effective leaders and have partnered with other United Nations entities to support women in running for political office in countries where elections have been or will be conducted. In the Sudan and Afghanistan, advocacy and capacity-building efforts continue to facilitate women's political representation and participation. In Cote d'Ivoire, the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire is supporting the women's political parties network for the creation of a database on women's representation.

Enhancing civic engagement in democratic processes

51. A freely functioning, organized, vibrant and responsible civil society is essential for a democracy. This presumes an active role for, inter-alia, non-governmental organizations and democratic reform groups, human rights groups, women's groups, youth groups, social movements, trade unions, minority representatives, professional societies and community groups and watchdog associations.

52. The United Nations Democracy Fund supports civil society projects around the world that strengthen the voice of civil society, promote human rights and encourage the participation of all groups in democratic processes. The large majority of these projects assist local NGOs in countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America that are in the transition or consolidation phases of democratization. These projects focus on strengthening democratic dialogue, civil society empowerment, civic education, freedom of the press and the rule of law.

53. In its first two rounds of funding, the Democracy Fund supported 132 projects in Member States of the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, amounting to a total of almost \$38 million. In the third round, out of a selection list of approximately 70 projects (currently being negotiated with the implementing agencies), 45 of the projects are to take place in member States of the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies.

54. Through volunteerism, UNV also works with partners to advance and reinforce a sense of civic engagement in societies. For example, in Kenya, following the post-election violence and working in close cooperation with the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund and the Government of Kenya, UNDP and UNV launched an Emergency Volunteer Scheme in February 2008, designed to promote post-election community dialogue. Formalized as the Neighbourhood Volunteer Scheme, it is

managed by UNV in cooperation with the National Secretariat for Peacebuilding and Conflict Management in the President's Office. A total of 21 national UNV volunteers trained 900 prominent youth leaders, retired professionals, women and opinion leaders in conflict resolution and community security, as well as humanitarian response and early recovery.

Supporting youth involvement in democratic participation

55. Children's and young people's rights to express their opinions to Government leaders and help shape the policies that affect them are explicitly encoded in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The programmes and activities of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) aim to strengthen child and youth involvement in democratic participation and include support for young people's participation at all levels, including in global, regional, national and local policymaking.

56. In several countries, UNICEF has promoted the institutionalization of children's participation in national policymaking by supporting the establishment of children's parliaments or congresses. The UNICEF offices in Azerbaijan, Djibouti, Mexico and the United Republic of Tanzania have recently supported the creation of new children's parliaments or youth councils. In addition, with UNICEF's support, children in Algeria, Armenia, Belarus, China, Ecuador, Lesotho, Thailand, the United Republic of Tanzania and Yemen have participated in the development or midterm review of their respective Governments' national plans of action for achieving the time-bound goals established in the A World Fit for Children plan of action.

57. In a number of other countries, young people contributed to the development of various national youth policies. The Dominican Republic's national policy document on children, youth and HIV/AIDS was developed at a children and youth NGO forum. Children's clubs supported by UNICEF in Nepal contributed to Nepal's interim Constitution. Child representatives from Jordan's Children's Parliament participated in several meetings and workshops to discuss the draft childhood act and national plan of action for children. In Yemen, children and young people from governorates participated in the first National Conference for Children and Youth, at which the National Strategy for Children and Youth was finalized and subsequently endorsed by the Government.

Providing support for democratic processes through good offices

58. The provision of support to efforts for overcoming political crises and preventing their escalation through good offices is a key aspect of the Organization's work.

59. In response to existing demand for good offices and mediation, and with support from Member States, the Secretary-General established a specialized Mediation Support Unit within the Department of Political Affairs in 2006. The Unit provides assistance to a large number of mediation efforts undertaken by the United Nations and its Member States. In addition, it serves as a central repository for peacemaking experience, including lessons learned and best practices. The Unit also coordinates training for mediators and provides them with advice on United Nations standards and operating procedures.

60. Within the Mediation Support Unit, a standby team of mediation experts was established in 2008. The standby team can be deployed on short notice to assist United Nations and non-United Nations mediation efforts around the world and is comprised of leading experts on issues such as power- and wealth-sharing, constitution-making and natural resource management. Its members are on standby to promptly assist United Nations envoys and political and peacekeeping missions in the field, as well as regional organizations, Member States and other partners with which the United Nations works closely.

V. The role of regional, intergovernmental and other organizations in the promotion and consolidation of democracy

61. In its resolution 62/7, the General Assembly encouraged Governments to strengthen national programmes devoted to the promotion and consolidation of democracy, including through increased bilateral, regional and international cooperation, taking into account innovative approaches and best practices.

Intergovernmental democracy movements and organizations with a global reach

62. Two principal global democracy movements, the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies and the Community of Democracies, have established themselves within the international community. Both are global platforms for the exchange of experiences and consultations on democracy issues.

63. To date, a total of six International Conferences of New or Restored Democracies have been held in: Manila (1988); Managua (1994); Bucharest (1997); Cotonou (2000); Ulaanbaatar (2003); and Doha (2006).

64. The Community of Democracies held its Fifth Ministerial Conference in Lisbon on 11 and 12 July 2009, on the theme “Impact of the global economic and financial crisis on democratic governance”. Civil society and non-governmental leaders from all regions of the world were also present and participated actively in the ministerial sessions. As at past meetings of the Community, the Lisbon meeting issued a ministerial declaration, outlining a set of commitments by Member States aimed at strengthening democratic development worldwide. Following this meeting, the Chairmanship of the Community of Democracies passed from Portugal to Lithuania.

65. There are a number of other democracy-related organizations that conduct work globally, including International IDEA and IPU.

66. International IDEA’s mission is to support sustainable democratic change by providing comparative knowledge, assisting in democratic reform and influencing policies and politics. In partnership with the United Nations, regional organizations, election management bodies, think tanks and civil society organizations, the institute has developed a body of knowledge resources and practitioners’ networks in key areas of democracy-building, such as electoral processes, political parties, constitution-building, gender and democracy, and the assessment of the quality of democracy.

67. IDEA's thematic programmes at the global level are focused on gathering and comparing codes of conduct and best practices emerging from concrete democratization processes. For example, the state of democracy assessment methodology and network were created to share experiences using a tool that allows citizens to assess the quality of their democracy and define priority areas for policy on democratic reform, based on the principles of local ownership and democratic dialogue.

68. IPU is the focal point for worldwide parliamentary dialogue and works for peace and cooperation among peoples and the establishment and consolidation of representative democracy. Its activities in the field of democracy are guided by the Universal Declaration on Democracy, adopted by IPU in 1997, and the guide to good practice that it published in 2006 entitled *Parliaments and Democracy in the Twenty-first Century*.

69. IPU has provided support to numerous national parliaments through advisory services, capacity-building seminars, workshops and training programmes, as well as by organizing focused study visits on various topics related to the functioning of parliament. It assisted several parliaments in this task in 2008, including Algeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Timor-Leste and the United Arab Emirates. IPU has also assisted the Parliament of Burundi to promote political dialogue and inclusive decision-making and, in cooperation with UNDP, has supported the Parliaments of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone and Togo in the formulation of long-term projects.

Regional and other intergovernmental organizations

70. The Secretary-General welcomes the wide range of complementarities and synergies between the United Nations and regional and intergovernmental efforts in promoting, consolidating and strengthening democracy and democratic practices at the local, national and regional levels. Regional and intergovernmental organizations provide valuable support to Governments and civil society in their respective regions by sharing best practices and disseminating knowledge and information about the role of democratic institutions and mechanisms in meeting political, economic, social and cultural challenges. They also assist in building capacities of State institutions, including parliaments and electoral bodies. By building partnerships with diverse elements of civil society, these organizations seek to increase democracy density and commitment to democratic values in emerging democracies.

71. A number of regional and intergovernmental organizations have established and continue to undertake new democracy-support initiatives. The Organization of American States (OAS) is committed to promote and strengthen democracy on the basis of the Inter-American Democratic Charter and conducts democracy-building and strengthening initiatives through its Office for the Promotion of Democracy and other mechanisms. OAS has been engaged, through its good offices, in several of the difficult political situations that have arisen recently in the region, including those in the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Honduras. It has continued to strengthen democratic processes in the region through its electoral observation missions and the technical cooperation provided to electoral institutions. OAS also works in the area of institutional strengthening and

modernization of legislatures by providing technical assistance to parliaments so they are better prepared to fulfil their representative and legislative functions.

72. The activities of the African Union in support of consolidating and upholding democratic governance are informed by the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance. The Charter goes beyond the confines of peer review and support; it empowers the Peace and Security Council of the African Union to respond proactively when there are serious lapses in governance, as may be reflected in, for example, an unconstitutional change of government. In addition to proactive diplomatic missions to avert crisis in new and restored democracies, the African Union continues to support the process of democratization by dispatching electoral observation teams for all national elections in Africa. These teams ensure that the principles of democracy are adhered to in those countries that are emerging from conflict. However, more recent experiences of post-electoral violence suggest that there are still many challenges that face the African Union in helping to uphold and consolidate democratic governance in Member States. Nonetheless, with the principled and dynamic approach adopted by the African Union, the Secretary-General hopes that these challenges will be overcome, as the culture of democratic governance continues to gain ground throughout the continent.

73. On the European continent, the Council of Europe provides a forum for its Member States to exchange best democratic practices and conducts democracy assistance activities in areas such as pre-electoral support, strengthening citizens' participation and promoting the development and consolidation of good local and regional governance. In addition, the Council encourages research and analysis on democracy in the twenty-first century through its network of schools of political studies, the Summer University for Democracy and the Forum for the Future of Democracy. It launched "European Local Democracy Week" in 2007 in order to increase public awareness and knowledge of local democracy and promote the idea of democratic participation at the local level.

74. Since 2007, the Council of Europe has developed a pre-electoral assistance programme that aims to assist the authorities of Member States to conduct free and fair elections in line with European norms and standards. In recent years, countries such as Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine have benefited from this programme.

75. At the European Union, democracy assistance is a core element of external relations. In 2006, it established the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights, a financial instrument that allows it to provide support for the promotion of democracy and human rights worldwide, especially through the activities of civil society and European Union electoral observation missions. Assistance under the Initiative complements other tools used to implement European Union policies for democracy and human rights, ranging from political dialogue and diplomatic initiatives to various instruments for financial and technical cooperation, including the Development Cooperation Instrument, the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance and the Instrument for Stability, focused on crisis-driven interventions.

76. The European Union, under its Swedish Presidency in 2009, has identified democracy-building as one of the three key priorities in the area of development policy. Democracy-building is also the subject of a joint paper by the Czech and Swedish Presidencies that aims to highlight ways in which the European Union can

“create a more coherent and overarching policy framework for democracy-building and democratic reform processes”.

77. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) implements measures in support of new or restored democracies in the OSCE area through various institutions and mechanisms. Its Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights works actively to uphold international and OSCE standards on elections, democratic institutions, the rule of law and human rights, assisting and advising participating States on these standards, as well as organizing events to review States’ implementation of their OSCE commitments.

78. Other OSCE representatives and institutions such as the High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Representative on Freedom of the Media and the Parliamentary Assembly also contribute to consolidating the institutions and processes of pluralistic and participatory democracy in the OSCE States. On the ground, the OSCE field operations in South-Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, South Caucasus and Central Asia continue to play a strong role in developing and building democratic institutions in the regions in which they are deployed.

VI. Enhancing cooperation and exchange of experiences between the United Nations and its international partners in the promotion of democracy

79. In paragraph 4 of resolution 62/7, the General Assembly encouraged regional and other intergovernmental organizations to share their experiences in the field of democracy promotion with each other and with the United Nations system, where appropriate. The United Nations attributes great importance to its partnerships with regional and intergovernmental organizations, including in the critical field of democracy promotion. Given that these partnerships are predicated on mutual respect and mutual learning, experience-sharing is an important part of these relationships.

Sharing experiences in the electoral field

80. In October 2005, in an effort to harmonize the practice of international election observation, the United Nations Secretariat, through its Electoral Assistance Division and 21 other institutions, including the European Union and regional organizations such as OSCE, OAS and the African Union, agreed to subscribe to and endorse the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and the Code of Conduct for International Election Observers. The Declaration of Principles, which has been endorsed by over 30 organizations worldwide, is the product of a detailed exchange of experiences and best practices among organizations involved in election observation or monitoring, a process that has been sustained annually since 2005 with yearly implementation meetings among the key participating institutions. In 2009, OSCE hosted the fourth meeting on the implementation of the Declaration of Principles in Poland, which constituted a sharing of experiences and best practices on the topic of strengthening election observation methodology. The Secretary-General encourages others to join the emerging consensus regarding these principles.

Building knowledge resources and practitioners' networks on democracy-building

81. The United Nations has been increasingly engaged in sharing experiences and collaborating with a wide array of regional and intergovernmental organizations, electoral bodies, think tanks and civil society organizations on democracy-building, contributing to the development of knowledge resources and expert networks on issues such as electoral processes, political parties, constitution-building, democracy and gender. International IDEA has been a key partner in this collaboration.

Experience-sharing in preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention

82. The United Nations Secretariat, through the Department of Political Affairs, continues to enhance its cooperation with organizations such as OAS and the European Commission and European Council Secretariat by carrying out exercises of experience-sharing on preventive diplomacy and conflict resolution approaches and by holding so-called desk-to-desk discussions. In 2009, one such meeting has been held with the OAS General Secretariat and one with the European Commission and European Council Secretariat; another European Union session is scheduled for autumn 2009. Many of the discussions are linked to challenges related to democratic governance and how such challenges can be addressed.

83. In a similar vein, the Department of Political Affairs is working on sharing experiences with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in the field of conflict prevention with a view to assisting SADC in enhancing its own capacity in this regard.

VII. Observations and recommendations

84. In the Secretary-General's report on new or restored democracies of 2007 (A/62/296), a number of recommendations were made relating to the United Nations cooperation with both intergovernmental democracy movements as well as regional and other intergovernmental organizations working in the field of democracy promotion. The Secretary-General also supported a full discussion of the General Assembly on the role of the United Nations in democracy assistance. In light of developments over the past two years and the continuing process of evaluating efforts on how best to provide sustainable democracy assistance, the following observations and recommendations are made.

Recommendation 1

Ensure continued momentum and support for the International Day of Democracy

85. The response of Member States, intergovernmental and regional organizations and the United Nations system itself to the celebration of the International Day of Democracy has been impressive. We must ensure that this momentum is sustained and, further, that we build on it. Indeed, commemoration of the day should be both deepened and broadened: deepened, to include all levels of society through activities directly involving citizens, especially the young; and broadened, to encompass activities in all corners of the world, as both a recognition and celebration of the importance and universality of democratic values and principles. The celebration of the International Day of Democracy is an excellent opportunity to enhance citizen

participation and to further foster dialogue among national actors in Member States, thus contributing to democracy-building on the ground. The Secretary-General calls on all Member States to continue to mark this important day and to actively promote its commemoration through citizens' participation. The Organization stands ready to provide support to meet this goal, as requested.

Recommendation 2

Encourage complementarity between the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies and the Community of Democracies

86. As stated in the Secretary-General's report of 2007 (A/62/296), an issue of interest for the United Nations is enhancing the degree of complementarity and coordination between the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies and the Community of Democracies. At present, Member States attend conferences, meetings and panels organized by both movements and contribute financially to their respective activities. The Doha Declaration of November 2006 encouraged consultation and increased cooperation to facilitate technical cooperation, including exchange of experiences about specific issues of common interest. For its part, the Community of Democracies supported the 2005 Santiago Ministerial Commitment, entitled "Cooperating for democracy".

87. Both movements should continue to actively seek and build synergies in their work, including through the establishment of mechanisms for coordination, cooperation and strategic partnership, where feasible. The United Nations stands ready to provide assistance in this regard if requested by both movements.

Recommendation 3

Ensure effective follow-up between New or Restored Democracies conferences

88. There is recognition within the New or Restored Democracies Movement of the need to move beyond periodic conferences and link the meetings to actual democracy-building efforts on the ground. The establishment of the Advisory Board of the Movement is a step in this direction. There is a need, however, for the Conference process to make better use of concrete experience-sharing, including from a South-South perspective, on the challenges and successes of democratic reform processes. Another example of possible follow-up actions is the implementation of self-assessments of the state of democracy by Member States with the aim of identifying areas for action and entry points for policy reforms.

89. There is also a need to support the Movement's institutionalization. One suggestion noted in the present report is the establishment of national committees on democracy to facilitate and coordinate national-level actions for democracy promotion and assist in the achievement of the primary goals of the Conference. A further development could be to establish a more systematic articulation between the governmental, parliamentary and civil society segments of the Conference, with a clear definition of roles and responsibilities for all the actors involved in the process.

Recommendation 4

Strengthen the democracy assistance of the United Nations

90. Demand for United Nations assistance on democracy-related issues such as capacity- and institution-building, elections and rule of law has grown considerably

over the past decade, and this trend is likely to continue. The Organization will actively and continually evaluate its efforts on how best to provide sustainable democracy assistance that builds national capacities and nurtures a democratic culture.

91. In reflecting the aspirations of its membership, the United Nations is well placed to help bring together critical partners at the global, regional and country levels to deepen support for democracy and the rule of law and to promote consensus on ways to achieve sustainable outcomes. The Organization should also improve its ability to take advantage of the wealth of analysis on democracy work being carried out outside the United Nations system.

Recommendation 5

Address the coherence and coordination of democracy assistance of the United Nations

92. Many parts of the United Nations system are engaged in one or more aspects of democracy assistance. It is therefore critical that coherence among United Nations initiatives in this area be improved, including interactions with stakeholders, partners and the wider international community. Better coherence requires an approach that ensures that democracy assistance is more effectively integrated into the three pillars of the Organization's work: peace and security; development; and human rights. As noted in the Secretary-General's report to the General Assembly at its sixty-second session, steps have been taken to intensify internal discussion within the United Nations on how we can bring more coherence and consistency in the assistance we deliver so as to maximize its effectiveness. As one step in this process, the Secretary-General has established an inter-agency working group on democracy to look at this issue and propose practical steps forward. There are also plans to establish a United Nations web portal on democracy that will serve as a gateway to information on the wide range of United Nations system efforts to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies. The portal will be a useful tool for fostering coherence and promoting a shared understanding of the principles and areas of United Nations democracy assistance.

93. I hope that the foregoing recommendations will be considered by the General Assembly during its sixty-fourth session. I intend to bring them to the attention of the United Nations system, regional organizations and other partners mentioned in the present report. For my part, I assure the international community that promotion of democracy will continue to be one of the priorities during my term as Secretary-General.