

NGO LEADERS APPLAUD CREATION OF UN DEMOCRACY FUND
APPEALS TO COMMUNITY OF DEMOCRACIES TO CONTRIBUTE

New York, July 27, 2005

Several NGO leaders who are part of the *Coalition for a United Nations Democracy Caucus* welcome the creation of the UN Democracy Fund, announced on July 4 by the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan at the Summit of the African Union, and urge the member states of the Community of Democracies to support its effective functioning.

The UN Democracy Fund represents an important opportunity to strengthen the United Nations' role in the promotion of democracy worldwide. The UN Democracy Fund will be established as a trust fund under the authority of the UN Secretary General who will approve proposals recommended by an advisory body composed of representatives of the major contributors to the fund, other governments active in promoting democracy, the UN Secretariat and two individuals representing nongovernmental organizations.

At its Third Ministerial Conference in Chile in April, the Community of Democracies endorsed the creation of the UN Democracy Fund. Now, the Community of Democracies governments should help finance the UN Democracy Fund to ensure that the first body in the history of the United Nations dedicated only to the promotion of democracy would be able to sustain, support and defend democracy when it is necessary. We note with appreciation in this regard the recent letter from 25 governments to SG Annan urging prompt establishment of the fund and committing themselves to provide funding in the near future. We hope, following the announcement by India and the United States to contribute \$10 million each to the fund, that other governments will also step forward quickly to support the fund.

The *NGO Coalition for a UN Democracy Caucus* welcomes the inclusion of two representatives from civil society on the proposed Advisory Board of the UN Democracy Fund and calls on the UN Secretary General to ensure the greatest transparency in the selection process.

We also endorse the Secretary General's decision to invite nongovernmental organizations, in addition to governments and intergovernmental agencies, to submit projects to the UN Democracy Fund aimed at strengthening democratic practices and institutions, and we look forward to learning more about the guidelines for applications.

We strongly welcome the idea that the projects supported by the UN Democracy Fund would be potentially carried out in all UN member states. It is therefore critical that the fund support independent local democratic NGOs and activists without conditioning assistance on the approval of the concerned State. International support for local NGO monitors and watchdogs is often one of the most critical factors to ensure that democratic standards and processes are respected.

Therefore, we call on all the member States of the Community of Democracies to make significant financial contributions to the UN Democracy Fund in order to enable it to improve the efforts of the world body in promoting democratic institutions.

The NGO Coalition is a group dedicated to the promotion and fulfillment of the principles of democracy and human rights embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Warsaw Declaration of the Community of Democracies.

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