

URGENT ACTION REQUESTED FOR CONVENING GROUP MEETING OF MAY 8

In the April 2006 issue of the National Endowment for Democracy's *Journal of Democracy*, NED's President Carl Gershman together with Michael Allen co-authored an article entitled "New Threats to Freedom: the Assault on Democracy Assistance." In it they document recent efforts by a number of nations including Russia, Venezuela, Zimbabwe and others to legislatively restrict the freedom of NGOs to operate, to deny NGOs legal status and to restrict foreign funding and domestic financing. Gershman and Allen identify a range of responses to those restrictions. They call upon the governments of the Community of Democracies "to respond to what they consider to be a fundamental threat to what the Warsaw Declaration identified as the right to pursue democracy as a universal norm." And they call upon the Community of Democracies to reaffirm and further elaborate on the Warsaw Declaration in light to new circumstances in order to counter the threat posed by the new restrictions.

The purpose of this message is first, to convey to members of the Nongovernmental International Steering Committee of the Community of Democracies the Gershman/Allen article and second, to suggest we approve a resolution addressed to the Convening Group of the CD calling upon them to raise this issue at the forthcoming Ministerial meeting of the UN Democracy Caucus in September and to place this issue as an action item on the agenda of the 2007 Bamako Ministerial of the Community of Democracies.

Resolution of the Convening Group of the Community of Democracies:

BEGIN RESOLUTION Recognizing that the Community of Democracies in its founding Warsaw Declaration affirmed its "**determination to work together to promote and strengthen democracy**", thereby acknowledging democracy promotion as an international norm:

We express our concern over the growing number of countries that have enacted or introduced legislation designed to restrict the democracy promotion efforts of nongovernmental organizations, and toward that end we call on all participants in the Community of Democracies to uphold the right of governments and nongovernmental organizations to provide material and technical assistance to support NGO efforts to promote and consolidate democracy. We express concern over efforts to suppress democratic promotion activities.

We request that such efforts to repress democracy promotion activity should cease and that any existing legal restrictions toward that end be repealed.

We further call on the members of the Community of Democracies to affirm in the strongest possible terms the rights of nongovernmental organizations to promote democracy in support of the rights defined in the Warsaw Declaration. Countries engaged in activities in violation of these rights and these internationally accepted norms should be excluded from participation in the Community of Democracies. END RESOLUTION