

Welcome Remarks

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

Members of the Advisory Board of the United Nations Democracy Fund, in particular Professor Doyle, Chair of the Advisory Board, Ambassador Ripert, Permanent Representative of France, Ambassador Takasu, Permanent Representative of Japan, Mr. Dossal, Executive Director of the United Nations Office for Partnerships, Mr. Mokhiber, chair of the UNDEF program consultative group, Excellencies, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

My name is Roland Rich and I am the Executive Head of the United Nations Democracy Fund. It is a great pleasure to welcome you to this United Nations Democracy Fund event on the occasion of the first International Day of Democracy.

Several purposes are served by this UNDEF information event. First, it gives us an opportunity to thank the 35 member states who have so generously made voluntary contributions to UNDEF. We are particularly proud of the fact that our donors come from every region of the world, that they span the spectrum of democracies from well established democracies to democracies at the pivotal point of transition and that their contributions have been so generous. Allow me to emphasize that UNDEF appreciates all the contributions large and small. Indeed we know that some the smaller contributions represent as much of a commitment to democracy as those of the larger contributors.

While speaking about contributions, it is incumbent on me to say that because democracy is an ongoing process, the work of UNDEF is an ongoing effort and we therefore need ongoing contributions. I would ask all 35 of our donors to consult with their capitals to see what further support they can provide.

This event also allows us to reach out to those member states that have not yet made a contribution to UNDEF. We believe that civil society plays a critical role in building and strengthening democracies and that UNDEF, to a modest degree, supports those efforts. UNDEF's operations are an open book. Please examine the information CD that we are making available, check our website or come and see us if you require any specific information about UNDEF. We also have a Question and Answer session today to allow you to pose any questions you may have about UNDEF.

As you will see from the program we have the chair and several members of our Advisory Board addressing you today. They can provide an inside view of the purposes and processes of UNDEF.

We are very fortunate to have two leaders of UNDEF projects to bring you their perspective from the field:

Ms Farrah Parvaiz Saleh
Executive Director
Citizen's Commission for Human Development
On UNDEF project "Strengthening Democratic Practices in
Pakistan"

Mme Voré Gana SECK
Présidente
Conseil des ONG d'Appui au Développement
On UNDEF project "Dialogue des sociétés civiles pour la
Démocratie en Afrique de l'Ouest"

The UN Democracy Fund is the Secretary-General's Fund. It is ultimately to the Secretary-General that we report and it is he who has the final influence on our work. Mr. Ban Ki-moon has time and again demonstrated his commitment to democracy promotion and it was under his guidance that the Fund decided to concentrate its efforts on supporting civil society. It is therefore a particular pleasure to have the Secretary-General grace our event today and I now call on him to deliver the keynote address.