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The United Nations
Democracy Fund

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Panel UN Support to Democracy Movements

Speaking Points

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It is a pleasure to be here and express, once again, the support of the United Nations to the ICNRD process and to one of its great leaders, Mongolia, a permanently reassuring force behind the UN's democracy and peacebuilding efforts.

Let me start by expressing our admiration for Mongolia's political transition, a model for the region and for the world. Not satisfied with this exemplar process, this country is now pioneering the movement of the democracy MDG, the drive towards more democracy, more accountability and more protection of rights through MDG9.

Mongolia has progressed enormously in a very short time, in one generation, and so have several other countries in the world: the East of Europe, Africa, Latin America and other Asian nations. Let me illustrate this with an anecdote: when your country was not democratic, mine wasn't either. As a student, I got my first passport and I perfectly remember that it said: "Valid for all countries of the world except the USSR, the People's Republic of China, "North Vietnam" and "Outer Mongolia"". It seems that our respective passports

have progressed since, are less ignorant, less afraid and have wider horizons - just as our societies.

The UN supports very free passports, very wide horizons, since its creation. As the Secretary-General has said: "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the General Assembly in 1948, enunciated the essentials of democracy. Ever since its adoption, it has inspired constitution-making in every corner of the world, and it has contributed greatly to the eventual global acceptance of democracy as a universal value."

There is now a renewed consensus on the importance of fostering democratic values. For the first time in its history, the UN has established an entity that couples the name of the organisation and the term Democracy. The UN Democracy Fund is yet another instrument to do more, to do better, to go farther in the same direction.: supporting democrats in the many different environments in which democracy can be nourished: during transition, during consolidation, after conflict and eventually during hard times.

In a changing political environment, the UN must explain what it means to provide Democracy assistance. Democracy is today closely linked to development, peace and stability. It is the necessary condition for an exit strategy in Iraq. It is at the forefront of the international efforts in the Middle-East. It is hoped for by an international opinion that supported the peoples of Georgia, the Ukraine or Kyrgyzstan in their colourful and peaceful revolutions.

Perhaps the single most important contribution of the UN is to say that just like Democracy and freedom are universal values, they can be translated into all languages of the world and may sound quite different in each of these idioms. In the words of the General Assembly "while democracies share common features, there is no single model of democracy... it

does not belong to any country or region". As Ms. Wetterqvist put it this morning very eloquently, it is a global public good that can be used by all.

I take pride that as UN reform moves forward, our capacity to support democratization is centre-stage. There is no post-conflict reconstruction today without a democratic agenda. In the face of the prophets of globalisation, for which the state will become progressively irrelevant and limited to acting as a minimal guarantor of a minimum of rights, a broad vision of the third millennium democracies wants them to reinforce the concept of polis, politis and political citizenry. As put by prof. O'Donnell, the actor of democracy is not the voter, asked to opine once every four years, but the citizen, who exercises his or her rights every day, at every step, in all aspects of life. The State is not mainly a regulator or a provider - and the citizen is not a client, because the relationship is mainly political, rights-based, not commercial or contractual. The currency is not satisfaction for service - however important this might be: nobody wants bad public service! - but legitimacy and responsiveness, accountability and democratic oversight.

The contractor state, the commercial state, contribute both actively to the status quo of inequality and poverty, do not deliver socially and ultimately kill the prestige and the hopes that democracy was bringing. In Latin America, for example, a number of democratically elected governments are challenging the capacity of the present international order to bring about needed improvements in social welfare. The prevailing view in the region is that democracy has not delivered development or emancipation for the poor. Inversely, this discourse is sometimes attacking fundamental freedoms as if with less liberty we could produce more wealth and a fair distribution thereof! The democratic state - and beyond the state the democratic society with its richness of self-organisation - is closer to the

UN's human development ideal, insofar it encompasses freedom from want and freedom from fear.

We need to say that we want both and that trade-offs are unacceptable, that we need honest and efficient democracies, no promises of providential authoritarian welfare, no poverty excuses for lack of liberty, no social injustice behind democratic facades. As said by Cornel West in his book "Democracy Matters", "we long for politics that are not about winning the political game, but about producing better lives", "for expressions of real concern both about the pain of our individual lives and about the common good". This is exactly the kind of Democratic movement the United Nations, in my views, should support: one where the complex truth is a blend of achievements, challenges and pains of the present and the greatest hopes for the future.

Thank you very much