

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**MESSAGE TO THE MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
OF NEW OR RESTORED DEMOCRACIES****New York, 17 December 2007**

*Delivered by Ms. Angela Kane
Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs*

It gives me great pleasure to send my greetings to all participants at this important meeting on democracy. I thank the Government of Qatar for organizing this event. Holding such a high-level meeting at the United Nations in between your regular conferences will help strengthen your movement and its follow-up mechanism.

You are meeting just six days after the terrorist strike in Algiers in which -- once again -- United Nations personnel were among the innocent victims. This was a despicable crime -- an attack not only against the United Nations, but against humankind itself. The international community must be resolute in opposing those who prey on the innocent and vulnerable. At the same time, our fight against terrorism should be carried out in strict adherence with international human rights obligations, whose observance is vital to every type of democracy.

In the long term, greater respect for human rights, together with democracy and social justice, are effective measures against terror. These values give people hope of achieving a decent life by peaceful methods, thus alleviating the despair and alienation that can drive some towards extremism. A democratic system also contributes to improved forms of conflict management, and it promotes equitable social and economic development.

Today, the increasing gap between the rich and the poor poses a clear threat to democracy. And, with unprecedented access to information, the world's poor have increased expectations of attaining the better standards of living and opportunities they so much deserve. While globalization promises faster growth everywhere, its benefits are not evenly distributed within and among States. Yet globalization -- with its potential to create an empowered global citizenry in an increasingly interconnected world -- also has the power to promote democratic governance across the globe. To fully unleash the democratizing potential of globalization, we must ensure that it serves to improve the lives of all people.

We must also work to honour our global commitments to promote gender equality -- another crucial component of the democratization process. That means ensuring adequate attention to the empowerment of women, and increasing the representation of women at all decision-making levels in national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms.

The promotion of democracy has long been a major concern of the United Nations. In 2005, this effort was bolstered with the establishment of the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF). The Fund complements the important work carried out by the International Conference on New or Restored Democracies.

UNDEF is currently receiving applications for its second round of funding disbursements. The Fund hopes to support projects in many of the countries that participate in this conference process. I believe your programme of work over the coming two years offers practical steps to assist Governments, national institutions, Parliaments, civil society and research organizations in their efforts to build high-quality democracies. And your intention to bring together all key partners in support of democracy is a particularly exciting venture, as it promises to cross-fertilize and enhance the contributions of each actor.

I look forward to working with you in the months and years ahead as we strive to advance our shared democracy agenda.

In that spirit, please accept my best wishes for a successful meeting.