

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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**REMARKS TO EVENT ON THE UNITED NATIONS
DEMOCRACY FUND (UNDEF)**

14 September 2005

President Bush,
Prime Minister Singh,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank the leaders of two of the world's great democracies, the United States and India, for convening this meeting in support of the newly-established United Nations Democracy Fund.

I also thank the many other leaders who are here today to show their support for the Fund, and to pledge contributions.

Democracy does not belong to any country or region. It should be the birthright of every person. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights enshrines the right of all people to choose their rulers. The Millennium Declaration stated that democratic and participatory governance, based on the will of the people, is the best assurance of human freedom.

The state of democracy in our world is everybody's business. Democracies generally act peacefully towards each other. When practised in good faith, democracy enables internal disputes to be resolved by political means, reducing the appeal of violent extremism. Democracy also helps to ensure that governments are accountable to the people, respectful of their rights and responsive to their needs.

Not all our Member States are democracies. But a majority are. Some are well-established democracies of long-standing. Others are at various points along the path. There is no single model of democracy. But the trend is clear: in the last decade alone, more than 1.4 billion people have gained the right to choose their government through free and fair elections. And all our Member States accept democratization as something desirable, at least in principle.

The work of the United Nations in support of democracy is not new. Today, we continue to help nascent democracies to conduct elections and promote good governance. We are working with countries emerging from a violent past to build democratic institutions and strengthen civil society. The UN assists one out of every three parliaments in developing countries. And on average, we support an election every two weeks somewhere around the world. Indeed, the United Nations must champion the right of all people to choose their rulers as strongly as we have long championed the right of all peoples to live free of colonial domination.

Democratization is never easy. The urge for it must spring from the people of each nation. But the United Nations must support democratization wherever it can. Your pledges will enable us to do so more effectively, in more countries. For that, I am profoundly grateful.

Thank you very much.