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Secretary-General SG/SM/10702

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**SECRETARY-GENERAL SAYS PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE BEST PATH TO
FREEDOM, GROWTH,**

**DEVELOPMENT, IN MESSAGE TO GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON NEW, RESTORED
DEMOCRACIES**

Following is UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's message, delivered by Amir Dossal, Executive Director, United Nations Fund for International Partnerships, to the Sixth International Conference on New and Restored Democracies in Doha, Qatar, 29 October:

It gives me great pleasure to send my greetings to all the participants in this important international conference on democracy. I commend the Government of Qatar for hosting this gathering, which shows its commitment to progress and modernization. Mongolia also merits recognition for the leadership it provided as the previous chair, and for its active implementation of the Ulaanbaatar Declaration.

This conference has become a dynamic vehicle for promoting the democracy agenda. Its tripartite structure, bringing Governments, parliament and civil society under one umbrella, accommodates diverse democratic experiences. And, its efforts have helped to widen acceptance of democratic governance around the world.

The United Nations has long worked to support democracy. We help nascent democracies to conduct elections and promote transparent, accountable governance. We work with countries emerging from conflict and political upheaval to build democratic institutions. We assist one of every three parliaments in the developing world. These efforts are based on two beliefs: that democracy is a universal right that does not belong to any country or region, and that participatory governance, based on the will of the people, is the best path to freedom, growth and development.

Of course, the road to democracy is not linear, and we often face challenges. In several parts of the world, some people feel disillusioned with political and economic models that are perceived as exclusionary. Others are frustrated at the inability of Governments to respond to the needs of their citizens. And the lack of legitimate channels for the articulation of demands and the airing of grievances can drive some people towards extremism and unacceptable acts of violence. A democracy that works is thus a conflict prevention instrument as well, allowing different views to be represented and heard.

The yearning for democracy must spring from the people of each country. But the United Nations must support democratization wherever it can. Last year, I established the United Nations Democracy Fund, which aims to build alliances that will strengthen the democratic fabric. Civil society is a key partner in this initiative. And the full spectrum of United Nations entities -- from development practitioners to political analysts, from peacekeepers to specialists in human rights and the advancement of women -- are giving it their active support. The first round of funding has just been approved, for projects in 110 countries, a majority focusing on women's rights since democracy is not possible without women's full and equal participation. I urge all of you to support the Fund, and use it to advance our common goals.

The Democracy Fund also shows United Nations reform in action. I hope you will support the Organization as we continue to build a more effective instrument of service to humankind. In that spirit of shared purpose, I offer you my best wishes for a successful conference.

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