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**Message of the Executive Director of the
United Nations Fund for International Partnerships
(UNFIP)**

**To the 114th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union
Nairobi, 7 May 2006**

Mr. President, Honoured Guests,

Secretary-General of the IPU, Excellencies,

Let me begin by thanking you for this invitation to join you today in launching what will surely prove to be a rich plenary debate on the state of democracy today. We share a strong commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, to the main principles of democracy and peace building and to the pursuit of multilateralism.

Undoubtedly the IPU and the UN share the challenges of the day and age we live in. The UN as a global intergovernmental body and the IPU as a global inter-parliamentary organization, are each uniquely positioned to play vital roles as peacemakers, peace brokers and agents for democratic change.

As you may be aware, the United Nations is in the midst of one of the most ambitious reform efforts in its history. The first important reform initiative is the creation of the

United Nations Democracy Fund. This is the fastest moving and furthest along initiative of the UN's reform package as adopted at the 2005 World Summit. Although several departments, funds and programmes of the United Nations are already engaged in promoting democracy, human rights and peoples' participation, the UN Democracy Fund represents an explicit expression of commitment by the United Nations as an agent of democracy promotion. The UN Fund for International Partnerships, which I head, provides management oversight to UNDEF and ensures that democracy promotion partnerships are part of the broader UN partnership strategies, which IPU is a privileged part of.

The Democracy Fund has been created under the direct authority of the Secretary-General and has so far received over \$US 50 million in contributions from Member States. It intends to inject support from the Member States of the United Nations to non-traditional partners of the United Nations, chiefly, civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, political parties, Houses of Parliament, parliamentary associations and other actors. It intends to become a strategic and innovative tool to enhance political participation, strengthen democratic processes and reach out to marginalized or excluded social actors. Your help in spreading the message will be invaluable. Just as two telling examples, the National Assembly of Afghanistan and the Parliament of Sri Lanka are already in contact with UN partners and with the Fund to participate in this year's UNDEF round.

Importantly, in welcoming the establishment of the Democracy Fund, the Member States reaffirmed the view – which we hold close to us in the UN – that while democratic

values are indeed universal, there is no single model of democracy that is superior to others. The UN and the UN Democracy Fund presuppose no single model of democracy, but rather embrace all democratic avenues.

The second rapidly moving pillar of UN reform is the new **Human Rights Council** – scheduled to hold its first session in June. The Council will strengthen and universalize international cooperation for the implementation of all human rights in all countries - including, of course, the right of all people to choose how they are ruled, and who rules them.

The third reform pillar is the **Peace Building Commission**, its Fund and Support Office. The Commission will assist countries emerging from conflict to achieve long-term peace and stability and ensure that they do not relapse into violence.

Allow me, in this context, to draw attention to the recent joint initiative undertaken by the UN and the IPU to adopt guidelines for the international community on Parliaments in crisis prevention and recovery. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the IPU and, in particular, President de Donnea, Head of the Belgian Delegation to the IPU, who will be presenting these important guidelines at this meeting, as well as Mr. Herman de Croo, Speaker of the Belgian Chamber of Representatives, who has been a leading force of this effort. This seminal document sets out the fundamental role of parliaments both in preventing conflict and in building peace after conflict, from overseeing reconstruction efforts to legislating human rights. It urges us not to see elections as an end in

themselves, but to capture their participatory energy in properly supported democratic institutions.

I also want to recognize the ongoing collaboration we enjoy with the IPU – which is accelerating. We all need the IPU, as a uniquely representative, legitimate, authentic voice of global citizens, to deepen its role in connecting the voters with institutions of global governance, and calling those institutions to account. The work of the IPU Permanent Observer Office at the UN is a heartening example of what simple innovations can achieve in integrating global and local politics.

Finally, it is vitally important for parliamentarians to keep issues of international organisation on the national agenda, and you are ideally placed to play a great role in facilitating this. We need to ensure that knowledge of UN activities infuses parliamentary debate if we want to build support for continued UN reforms.

Thank you.