

**The Hon. Alexander Downer, MP**

MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AUSTRALIA

**Media Release**

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# **Australian appointed to lead UN Democracy Fund**

I welcome the appointment of Mr Roland Rich to the position of Executive Head of the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF).

Mr Rich will lead and coordinate the work of UNDEF in supporting democratization throughout the world by financing projects that build and strengthen democratic institutions, promote human rights, and ensure the participation of all groups in democratic processes. Australia was among those countries that urged the establishment of UNDEF in the lead up to the UN World Summit in 2005. Australia is UNDEF's fifth largest donor and an inaugural member of the Advisory Board.

Australia is a strong supporter of democracy building around the world through our support for multilateral institutions such as UNDEF, the Centre for Democratic Institutions, and our bilateral aid programs. In 2007-08, approximately 25 per cent of Australia's Overseas Development Assistance will be spent on governance activities.

The appointment reflects well on Australia's continuing multilateral focus on democracy and good governance issues. It is also a credit to Mr Rich, who has over 30 years of experience in diplomacy, international law and democracy promotion. Mr Rich was founding Director of the Australian National University's Centre for Democratic Institutions, an Australian Government initiative, from 1998 to 2005. Mr Rich has been a research fellow at the National Endowment for Democracy in Washington DC and most recently served on the Australian Defence College staff, teaching and mentoring senior officers studying at the Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies.

Mr Rich has had broad international experience in his career, including diplomatic postings to Paris, Rangoon and Manila, and serving as Australia's Ambassador to Laos from 1994 to 1997.

Mr Rich is expected to take up his appointment in early October 2007.

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