

STATEMENT BY  
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PRESIDENT OF THE FIFTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE  
OF NEW OR RESTORED DEMOCRACIES

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ON AGENDA ITEM 20 ENTITLED

“SUPPORT BY THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM  
OF THE EFFORTS OF GOVERNMENTS  
TO PROMOTE AND CONSOLIDATE NEW OR  
RESTORED DEMOCRACIES”

New York, 5 November 2003

Mr. President,  
Distinguished delegates,

It is a distinct honor and privilege for me in my capacity as President of the Fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies to report to the present session of the United Nations General Assembly on the outcome of the Conference held from 10 to 12 September this year in the city of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. If the first Conference held back in 1988 in Manila was attended by the representatives of 13 countries, the delegates of 119 countries from around the world, a host of international organizations, including the United Nations, and about 100 non-governmental organizations participated in the Ulaanbaatar Conference. This clearly testifies to the dynamic expansion of the movement embracing both young and mature democracies. It is of special significance to my country – Mongolia that this global democracy conference has taken place in the heart of Asia, where empires were born and crumbled, where unprecedented social experiments had taken place, and where we see now the emergence of a new global commitment to democracy and good governance.

For Mongolia to host this prestigious global assembly was a matter of great honor. We saw it also as a great responsibility. Today I am happy to report to you that the Conference has been a success, and that is a conclusion shared by all the participants. I avail myself of this opportunity to thank all the countries for their active participation in the work of the Conference. My special appreciation go to Australia, Canada, Cyprus, Germany, Japan, Italy, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Norway, Republic of Korea, Qatar, Turkey, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, the European Commission, Canada Fund and the organizations of the United Nations system for their valuable assistance and support in organizing this important event.

Mr. President,

A record number of States, 119, and some 30 of them at the ministerial or equivalent levels participated in the Fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, thus registering the highest proportion of high-ranking officials in ICNRD gatherings.

An innovation in the Conference was a parallel Parliamentary Forum, organized jointly by the Parliament of Mongolia and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. It brought together 120 Members of Parliament from 47 countries. A highly interactive civil society forum, with some 240 participants from 64 countries, preceded the Conference. Both forums presented their results to the Conference. In addition, the Governments of participating countries were encouraged to include in their national delegations members of Parliament and representatives of civil society. And that was the case with most of the delegations represented at the Conference.

Such a three-tiered format was for the first time introduced at the ICNRD 5 and I believe that future conferences should continue this practice as it has proved its usefulness and relevance in Ulaanbaatar.

Mr. President,

The main theme of the Fifth ICNRD was “Democracy, Good Governance, and Civil Society”. The agenda reflected the most pressing and critical issues of democracy around the world. The discussion was structured around the three main areas of concern, namely:

- “Strengthening Democratic Governance and Cooperation with Civil Society”,
- “Challenges to and Opportunities for Democracy”, and
- “Partnership and Participation in Poverty Reduction and Attainment of the Millennium Development Goals”.

The delegates engaged in a fundamental debate on how to consolidate the political choice of democracy and sustain it both by the people’s own efforts – politically, economically, and intellectually, and by global commitments to democracy by nations, both large and small. In the words of Mongolia’s President, Mr. Natsagiin Bagabandi, “democracy is not a fairy tale, ... neither it is a gift from someone”. “Democracy as an outstanding achievement of humanity makes it a duty for everyone committed to it, to strengthen its political institutions and safeguard it against any risks”. The delegates to the Fifth ICNRD received a message from the United Nations Secretary-General Mr. Kofi Annan, in which he noted the progress made in democratic development but cautioned against triumphalism, given the setbacks around the world including the weakening of the substance of democracy, abuse of electoral systems, and the alienation of a growing number of people who felt marginalized and excluded.

Some 70 heads of delegations spoke in the plenary exchanging experience in promoting democracy and good governance as well as identifying the manifold challenges facing democracy in both national and international context along with ways and means to address them. The keynote address to the Conference was delivered by Prime Minister N.Enkhbayar, who presented an in-depth analysis of Mongolia’s democratic movement in its historical perspective and offered specific ideas and suggestions aimed at strengthening the movement of new or restored democracies in the evolving globalized environment that we live in.

Mr. President,

The Fifth ICNRD focused on the following qualitative and substantive issues of democracy and their solutions: the rule of law, improvement of democratic constitutional arrangements, democratic political and electoral systems, the threat of electoral fundamentalism and the need for electoral reforms, civil and political rights of citizens, accountability and transparency of

government, the dangers of bureaucracy and corruption, consolidation of multi-party systems, the role of free media, civil society organizations as vehicles of democracy, institutional arrangements for state-civil society partnerships, the ability of local communities to participate in decision-making, inclusiveness of the democratic process, and representation and participation of citizens.

The delegates were unanimous in their belief that democracy should not be taken for granted and that a wide and inclusive discussion of the above issues and the political will and solidarity were the necessary prerequisites to strengthen democracy. They also noted that democratic reforms were a continuous process with no “one size fits all” solutions. However, the basic values and principles as well as the normative dimensions of democracy as embodied in basic human rights’ instruments serve as the essential guidelines to be respected by all democracies, both mature and young. The overriding motif expressed throughout the deliberations at the Fifth ICNRD was the need for better quality of democracy, its entrenchment, and internalization of democratic culture. One of the most important aspects of democracy is the quality of governance. The delegates concentrated on ways to make governance more effective and participatory, more transparent and just, more responsive and responsible.

During the discussions at the Fifth ICNRD a strong concern was voiced to the effect that globalization had been largely detrimental to democracy, as it had resulted in increased poverty and marginalization, especially of the weakest. While globalization presented a number of opportunities, it was underlined that regulatory frameworks in various spheres at the international level were required to mitigate its negative effects.

The delegates unanimously condemned terrorism and upheld the central role of the United Nations in fighting that scourge. The deliberations also called for global democratic multilateralism to strengthen strategic partnerships for democracy, development and social progress. The attainment of the Millennium Development Goals and elimination of poverty, unemployment and social exclusion also required a genuine partnership for development at national, regional, and international levels.

Mr. President,

At the end of deliberations, the Fifth ICNRD adopted two major documents reflecting the core principles and undertakings discussed by the participants and charting the future for democratic development. The Ulaanbaatar Declaration and the Plan of Action will guide the activities of the ICNRD for the coming years. Both documents serve to preserve the continuity of the ideas of the previous ICNRD conferences and at the same time to find new paths to strengthen democracy and the international democratic movement. The Ulaanbaatar Declaration sets forth six key principles endorsed by the Fifth ICNRD, that is, democratic societies are (1) just and responsible, (2) inclusive and participatory, (3) promote and protect the rights and freedoms of all their members, (4) open and transparent, (5) function under agreed rules of law and accountability regardless of the challenges they may face, and (6) show solidarity toward

others. The countries agreed to a total of fifty-two commitments falling under these six principles. The Plan of Action outlines ways in which the commitments of the Declaration can be implemented at national, regional and international levels. In this respect, I wish, on behalf of my Government, to commend the Secretary-General for his report under this agenda item (A/58/392), which in addition to outlining the work and results of the Fifth ICNRD provides an analytical description of the activities carried out by the United Nations system in recent years in the area of assistance to democracy and governance.

Mr. President,

With democracy at the heart of all the solutions laid out in the Declaration and the Plan of Action adopted by the Fifth ICNRD, it is our prime responsibility now to have the commitments fulfilled. The Plan of Action strongly recommends strengthening the Follow-up Mechanism to promote and implement the measures endorsed at the Ulaanbaatar Conference. Proceeding from this particular premise, may I share with you some preliminary ideas on how to ensure an effective follow-up to the Fifth ICNRD.

First of all, in line with the recommendation of the Ulaanbaatar Conference, the President of the Fifth ICNRD is to establish, with the assistance of the United Nations, a working group to examine the conclusions of the Fifth Conference and proposals made in background papers submitted to and interventions made at the Fifth Conference with the aim of studying proposals for making the ICNRD more effective and efficient and establishing a practical program of work. The working group is to operate within a certain time frame and come up with specific proposals on guiding the implementation of the final documents of the Fifth ICNRD and monitoring its progress. I believe that the Group of the Friends of the Chair informally established at the end of the Ulaanbaatar Conference could be formalized shortly and serve as a core of this working group. I understand that informal consultations are underway in order to find an acceptable solution to this issue.

The Plan of Action specifically refers to developing national plans to strengthen democracy, preparing "country information notes" outlining the prospects of advancing and deepening democracy in the country, and developing nationally owned democratic indicators' databases to be better able to monitor progress in democratic development. Apart from helping national consensus building with the engagement of all stakeholders, this exercise will, in our view, also contribute to further national consolidation of democracy. The Plan of Action also recommends that the development of nationally owned democratic indicators should benefit from the current work being done in other multilateral fora. The experience and expertise of ongoing practices could prove useful in developing methodology to be pursued in national exercises.

Second, I intend to conduct consultations with Chairs of relevant regional organizations on possible avenues of cooperation to advance the implementation of activities identified in the Plan of Action for regional action.

Third, I would like to suggest a regular schedule for the meetings of the Follow-up Mechanism to be better able to sustain and monitor the ICNRD process. This will be especially helpful as we tend to become immersed fully in the daily affairs of diplomacy. However, the function that we have taken upon ourselves demands that we, diplomats, work both as leaders and guardians of the ICNRD spirit.

Fourth, in pursuit of the Plan of Action I intend to initiate discussions with the Chair of the Community of Democracies to exchange views on ways of bringing closer the two movements, in a complimentary manner.

Fifth, I shall conduct consultations with interested countries on the venue, timing and the theme of the next Conference - ICNRD 6. So far the State of Qatar has made an official offer to host the ICNRD 6 in Doha, which was duly noted at the Ulaanbaatar Conference.

Sixth, my delegation has prepared a draft resolution under this agenda item that reflects the proceedings and outcome of the Fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies. I am pleased to inform you that as a result of consultations Mongolia, together with 82 co-sponsors, has submitted a draft which, I hope, will command the broadest support of this august Assembly. We also hope that many more countries will join the draft resolution as co-sponsors in the days ahead.

Mr. President, although the lights at the Conference podium are now dimmed, the ICNRD process should go on, and our words need to be backed by action, action that is united and focused on essentials. So, let us move forward, shoulder to shoulder, in a concerted way to strengthen democracy and good governance in the world at large. As was eloquently said in the song devoted to the Fifth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies - let us all "stand tall together for democracy and peace, the movement for the people, the movement for the free".

Thank you for your kind attention.