

SHINING A LIGHT: U.S. EFFORTS TO STRENGTHEN DEMOCRACY WORLDWIDE

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“By supporting emerging democracies in their development, the United States seeks to build a more secure and economically prosperous world in which individuals can live freely and enjoy healthy and productive lives,” says Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky. At the same time, she says America seeks to “shine a light on those governments that deny their citizens basic freedoms and liberty.”

The American way of life is rooted in the freedoms and liberty guaranteed by a democratic government. Recognizing the vital importance of democracy, the United States is firmly committed to helping other governments in their democratic development. Accordingly, the U.S. government and its citizens are actively engaged throughout the world in helping countries to consolidate democratic institutions, bolster emerging democracies, and shine a light on those governments that deny their citizens basic freedoms and liberty.

The promotion of democracy globally benefits not only the citizens of recipient countries, but also helps other democratic nations and the international system as well. By expanding the global community of democracies and supporting emerging democracies in their development, the United States seeks to build a more secure and economically prosperous world in which individuals can live freely and enjoy healthy and productive lives.

Experience teaches us that democracies are stronger partners in promoting peace and security, supporting open and free markets, protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, and fighting international crime and terrorism. Democracies are better equipped to avoid man-made humanitarian crises and better able and willing to provide political, economic, and civic opportunities for their citizens, and to enable them to reach their full potential. Democracies are tolerant and provide the best environment in which people of diverse faiths,

beliefs, and cultures can live in peace. Democracies are better stewards of the environment and more committed to sustainable development and poverty eradication. In short, it is in the interest of everyone around the globe to see democracy flourish. The United States is not alone in this belief, and therefore has scores of partners in this effort.

Democratic goals and values can, of course, be fostered in various ways. The U.S. government recognizes and celebrates the many faces of democracy, as this political system takes hold in countries with a variety of ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds.

While democratic countries are diverse, their core elements are consistent and uniform. Democracies protect the rights of all citizens and respect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all people. Democratic institutions work in the interest of a country’s citizens, are accountable to these citizens, and operate in a transparent manner.

The rule of law guides governmental and citizen action, establishing needed protections and mechanisms for resolving disputes. Governmental powers are diffused so as to avoid their undue concentration in the hands of a single individual or institution. More broadly, good governance provides the assurance that a country’s resources will be shepherded in ways that benefit the populace, and that people will be free to improve their lives and contribute to achieving the aspirations of their

families and societies. A vibrant civil society — which includes free media, active nongovernmental organizations, and an educated citizenry — is essential to overall democratic development and to holding governments accountable. Recognizing that a private sphere exists and ensuring that it remains free from government regulation is an essential attribute of a system of ordered liberty.

The United States government utilizes numerous tools to expand the global community of democratic nations and assist emerging democracies. It provided more than \$700 million in the past year to assist democracy and governance efforts throughout the world, including training of judges and lawyers, building the capacity of nongovernmental organizations, supporting and educating journalists, helping political party development, monitoring elections, and strengthening the institutions, policies, and practices that create the fabric of a democratic society. While much of our support is bilateral, we also work actively through international organizations and multilateral lending agencies. We advocate the inclusion of key democratic principles — such as the promotion of transparency, accountability, active civil engagement, and civic education — in multilateral programs.

At the same time, the United States continues to raise its voice on behalf of those whose voice is silenced. Our government has spoken out against those regimes that deny citizens the right to express their views or practice their religion, select their government freely, or to hold governments accountable for protecting citizens' best interests. Working individually and in multilateral fora, such as the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, the United States has been a consistent advocate for respect of international standards of human rights. The State Department's annual Country Reports on Human Rights Practices shed light on the progress being made on governments' commitment to protecting the freedoms that are at the very heart of democracy.

Organizations like the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) have been stalwarts for advancing democratic principles for 20 years. Their work, including building the capacity of local organizations to carry the mantle of change, has been a major

engine of growth in the democracy movement. In many countries where the government has continued to refuse to be responsive to its citizenry, the United States supports nongovernmental organizations and activists that are fighting for the most basic principles of freedom and liberty. The United States recognizes the essential nature of these voices in helping others know their right to be governed well and to have a say in the development of their families, societies and countries.

In exceptional cases, where government oppression has reached extreme levels, the United States has been willing to utilize various forms of pressure, including economic sanctions, travel bans, and criminal indictments of guilty officials to help promote change. U.S. policy toward the Burmese military regime is a good example of this approach. In carrying out these pro-democracy initiatives, the United States seeks to engage the support of other countries and of the appropriate regional and global organizations.

In addition to vigorous public statements, bilateral assistance and actions, and multilateral engagement, there are numerous initiatives that the United States supports or leads to accomplish its goal of promoting democracy worldwide.

One such initiative is the Community of Democracies (CD), a unique movement that brings together democratic nations from around the globe to join forces to bolster democratic development and support emerging democratic nations. While there are numerous multilateral organizations in which countries work, based on regional, linguistic, religious, or sub-regional ties, this forum brings countries together based solely on their commitment to promote democracy. Here countries have recognized this common bond, committed themselves to shared principles, and are now putting those principles into action. The United States has maintained its leadership role in this effort, given our commitment to utilizing effective multilateral opportunities to promote democracy. We recognize and support the inherent value of strengthening coordination among countries that share basic democratic principles.

Last November in Seoul, at the second ministerial meeting of the Community of Democracies, more than 100 nations expressed their support for the Seoul Plan of Action, a dynamic approach to turning into action the principles enshrined in the 2000 Warsaw Community of Democracies Declaration. Countries noted the importance of strengthening regional cooperation, countering challenges to democracy, bolstering civic education, promoting good governance and the rule of law, increasing volunteerism, and coordinating democracy assistance. As a follow-up this past June, the U.S. government hosted 14 African and Latin American countries — all members of the Organization of American States or the African Union — to discuss how these countries and organizations can address threats to democracy and consolidate democratic institutions throughout their regions. Country participants — from Botswana to Chile, Jamaica to Senegal — commended the meeting for allowing a frank and honest exchange of views on the challenges faced at home and in their regions.

Another major U.S. initiative is the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), announced by President Bush in February 2002. MCA will increase current levels of core development assistance by 50 percent over the next three years, thus providing annual funding of \$5 billion by fiscal year 2006. But this is not simply an effort to provide more money. It is a means of showing our commitment to lasting development progress and it is a historic new vision for development based on the partnership and shared interests of developed and developing nations alike. It will provide funding to countries that demonstrate a strong commitment to ruling justly, investing in their people, and encouraging economic freedom. Indeed, MCA is focused on accelerating

growth, promoting success and lasting results, thereby further improving the global record of poverty eradication.

This initiative recognizes the fundamental importance of ruling justly, which includes upholding the rule of law, rooting out corruption, and protecting human rights and political freedoms. We place particular value on advancing the cause of women and ensuring their full political, legal and economic equality. MCA recognizes that sound political and economic governance that sustains both freedom and opportunity are the bedrock of stable, prosperous democracies. Transparent and accountable institutions held together by the rule of law support both vibrant and effective public and private sectors that are mutually reinforcing in improving living standards. The MCA illustrates that the United States' commitment to democracy is a consistent thread throughout our foreign policy goals.

In numerous multilateral fora, such as the World Summit for Sustainable Development, we have worked with other countries to ensure that progress on the democratic front is actively integrated into overall development. It is central to our key foreign policy priorities, such as the U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative and our engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan. The United States recognizes that this will be the best hope for lifting people out of poverty, ending human rights abuses, and allowing people to claim their futures.

The United States will continue to work with governments and nongovernmental organizations that share our commitment to making the world more secure, prosperous, and peaceful. Together we will work to strengthen democracy worldwide. ●