

CITIZEN DECLARATION ON INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DEMOCRACY

September 15, 2008

*At the 46th plenary meeting held on November 8, 2007, the UN General Assembly declared September 15 as **International Day of Democracy**.* The Civil Society Organizations undersigned, that work on various efforts to strengthen democracy in the Americas and the Caribbean, express our desire to live in democratic systems where we can achieve peace, prosperity, respect for human rights, the rule law, solidarity, shared responsibility, consensus, and environmental protection.

We endorse the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the American Convention on Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Inter-American Democratic Charter, and we call on governments to adhere to the principles found in these documents. We also endorse the commitment to defend democracy whenever and wherever it is threatened.

We propose to governments, media, businesses, religious groups, academics and other civil society actors to promote a profound and inclusive discussion about the ways to achieve a total adherence to democratic ideals.

In response to the important and urgent needs that require the implementation of these principles, and on the occasion of the first International Day of Democracy (We the undersigned organizations):

- 1) Demand that governments be chosen in free and fair elections, without manipulation, through transparent voting systems, with technical credibility and proven mechanisms of political participation based on law and international standards.
- 2) Demand short and fixed terms in the exercise of governmental power, and clear mechanisms for monitoring and revoking the mandates of popularly elected officials in the event they should be provided do not comply with the law or act in breach of Human Rights. In cases of reelection, other candidates should be provided with equal opportunities to be elected. Similarly, we demand that candidates for popular elective office submit specific and realistic plans that can be monitored, evaluated and subject to discussion by all interested citizens, should those candidates be elected.
- 3) Demand respect for freedom of the press and the right to transmit and receive information without prior censorship. We also call upon States to create or improve legislation on access to public information as a fundamental right of an active and participatory citizenship.
- 4) Demand that civil servants, at all levels, perform their duties, with due respect to democratic institutions and processes and state laws under the rule of law and regulatory frameworks of integrity and transparency. We also demand that government, and we urge civil society to publicly reject civil servants and elected officials who abuse their status and power, possess

wealth that they cannot justify, or hold irregular privileges, and we call on citizen groups, the press, academics, and governments to promote a culture of transparency and integrity in public administration.

5) Demand that the plans of government at all levels should aim to meet at least the following conditions: ensuring individual freedoms and rights as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; promote collective welfare, inclusion, respect for minorities and non-discrimination; and work towards the elimination of social inequities. No doctrine or promise of power should be permitted to violate the basic civil and political rights of citizens under the pretext of national interest or any other.

6) Demand that governments be civilian in nature, reject any manifestation of military power in the exercise of public office and renounce the military or civilian-military encroachments in political space under nationalist or messianic arguments.

7) Demand efficient self-government, according to the existing institutions and the rule of law, that will work for the common good; we also reaffirm the need for controls and audits among the branches of government, and reject any Executive or Legislative interference with, or undue pressure on, the Judiciary.

8) We demand that governments ensure the right of association and respect the free functioning of civil society organizations and other forms of association of democratic participation. We demand the cessation of persecution against journalists, members of trade unions, defenders of human rights, democratic activists, civil society organizations and academics and we remind States of their obligation to protect all men and women who defend or promote fundamental human rights.

9) Demand that government policies work towards the satisfaction of basic needs of all citizens; efficient public services, education, and quality and accessible health and housing; stable and productive employment, freedom of private enterprise; and social security and balanced use of natural resources. We also emphasize the important attention that leaders should pay to persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, senior citizens, and the independent workers. We endorse the United Nations Declaration on Indigenous Peoples issued on September 13, 2007, in particular Article 3 that reads: "Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural."

10) Demand non-discrimination towards women and a commitment of states to develop democracy with the active participation of women within the public sphere and public policy making, as well as in generating and disseminating educational policies against violence and abuse of any kind against women and girls. It is imperative to take urgent and effective actions to confront the increasing trend of female poverty, misogyny, as well as trafficking and forced displacement of women around the world.

11) Declare our solidarity with the disadvantaged and call on governments to prioritize the fight against poverty and exclusion as a priority for building truly democratic societies. We

also support international solidarity to provide dignified living conditions for all. We demand the respect of the universal right to identity.

12) Demand that development models be based on environmentally sustainable activities and the dedication of financial, human, institutional, and technological resources of our countries to the development of infrastructure, culture, sport and science. We also demand political decentralization, the elimination of monopolies and estates, as well as the development of broad and worthy public spaces for leisure and healthy recreation.

13) Appeal for dialogue, negotiation, and cooperation as the only ways to resolve conflict publicly rejecting war, the arms race, militarism, terrorism, and any violent demonstration in a nation. Similarly, we demand that governments guarantee victims of armed conflicts and violence the right to truth, justice and reparation.

14) Demand laws, judicial systems, prisons, and policies that emphasize rehabilitation and have a preventive and moralizing effect. This will help build a society free of violence and corruption.

15) Encourage public policies that pay tribute to and promote family values in its various forms; respect for elders and children, and various spiritual beliefs; the value of sport and culture; love of neighbor; respect of differences and diversity; goodness; shared responsibilities; respect for the environment and other human values.

We, the undersigned, are committed to reflect, discuss, disseminate, and enforce this **Citizen Declaration for The International Day of Democracy**.

We urge our representatives in government to endorse and fully adhere to these requirements.

We want to express our gratitude to the Observatio de la Democracia for the original version of the Declaration which was the base for our deliberation and text.

Latin American and Caribbean Network for Democracy

A part of the World Movement for Democracy

www.democracialatinoamerica.org

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