



Council for a Community of Democracies

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Dear Mr. President-elect:

Your election inspires hope around the world that the vision of building cooperation among the democracies to advance our common values and interests can be fulfilled.

We applaud your campaign commitment to support effective, accountable, and democratic institutions and to reinvigorate multilateral cooperation to advance democracy, development, good governance, and human rights. In the attached memorandum we offer you and your Administration some concrete ideas on advancing the cause and the practice of democracy.

Our twelve recommendations focus on a strategy for re-invigorating the Community of Democracies (CD), which was created by US government leadership in 2000 with the instrumental support of our organization, the Council for a Community of Democracies (CCD). We believe the CD is an important – but so far underutilized platform for advancing democracy, social and economic development, and the rule of law. It has enjoyed the bipartisan support of the last two U.S. administrations.

During much of the last eight years the CD's progress has been hampered by overseas perceptions that U.S. policies of democracy promotion have been too ideological and have often put narrow American political interests ahead of humane values. Some European countries have thus been reluctant to support the CD, despite their own democratic roots. They will surely respond positively to an early appeal from you and your Administration to work in partnership to promote shared values and to advance democratic ideals.

Working with key democratic allies, particularly in Europe, we believe that for relatively little cost your Administration could help reenergize multilateral cooperation in support of democracy while helping to restore America's reputation as a moral beacon. We at CCD stand ready to help you in any way that we can in this effort.

Respectfully yours,

Amb. Robert Hunter

On behalf of the Board of Directors
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Memorandum

From: The Council for a Community of Democracies¹
To: The Incoming Obama Administration
Subject: New Opportunities in Global Democracy

Recommendations:

Strategy

1. Signal **continued U.S. support for the Community of Democracies (CD)**, in time to help Portugal stage meetings in January, February and March 2009 to prepare the Lisbon CD Ministerial in July 2009.
2. Call for a **Summit of the Democracies** in 2009 or 2010 to mark the CD's tenth anniversary and to infuse leadership at the highest levels to lift the CD to the next plane.
3. Channel **US leadership through multilateral means** so that the US is perceived as one partner among many rather than as seeking to dominate the CD.
4. Engage in a **new dialogue** with leading democracies on breathing fresh life into the CD.
5. **Alleviate French concerns** and urge Paris to help remove barriers to European Union participation in the CD under the 2009 EU Presidencies (the Czech Republic and Sweden).
6. Encourage **other major democracies** throughout the world to assume **leadership and ownership** of the CD.

Programs

7. Call on the CD's Secretariat and the International Center for Democratic Transition (ICDT) to codify member countries' best practices to **alleviate poverty, promote transparency, social inclusion and women's empowerment**, and to **combat corruption**.
8. Press the CD Working Group on *Democratic Governance and Civil Society* to create a forum to **bring together** the major **democracy assistance donor governments** to share best practices, limit duplication, and focus on priority opportunities.
9. Encourage and support **CD-sponsored missions** to countries in democratic transition or undergoing stress, to help strengthen democratic institutions and mediate crises.
10. Promote and help fund **large-scale professional and educational exchanges** among democracy practitioners and advocates worldwide, facilitated by the CD Secretariat.

CD Reform

11. Help **fund the CD's institutions** - the Intergovernmental and Civil Society Secretariats and the International Center for Democratic Transition (ICDT).
12. Support structural **reforms of the CD's governance and operating procedures**, as elaborated on the next page.

¹ This Memorandum was produced by an Ad Hoc Task Force of the Council for a Community of Democracies, whose terms of reference and membership are described in the box on page 5.

New Opportunities in Global Democracy

The advent of the Obama Administration presents new opportunities to spark a revival of international cooperation among the world's democracies. There is a solid foundation on which to build collaboration and capitalize on the pent-up political will – and demand – for a new multilateralism. For relatively little cost in funds and political or diplomatic capital, the Obama Administration can meet two important U.S. foreign policy goals – to renew the world's faith and trust in America's credibility and moral leadership; and to restore whole-hearted multilateral cooperation with our friends and allies in pursuit of universal goals of democracy, good governance, human rights, and broad-based development.

The Community of Democracies (CD) offers an important platform - so far underutilized - for multilateral cooperation toward these ends. Working together, the world's more advanced democracies can take significant steps to consolidate and deepen new democracies, to help fragile democracies nurture their institutions and serve their people better, to defend and protect individual democrats at risk under authoritarian regimes, to stand up to authoritarian forces that seek to reverse the democratic gains of recent decades, and to contribute to stronger democratic cooperation for sustainable security on such transnational issues as climate change, disease, and poverty.

CD Structural Reform

To be effective, the CD needs some changes in its governance and operating methods. We recommend:

- **CD Membership** must be limited to genuine democracies, guided by a rigorous evaluation process by independent experts. Building on the successful independent advisory committee for the 2007 Ministerial Meeting of the CD, an **International Advisory Group on Membership** should be housed in a permanent institution outside the United States, such as the ICDT in Budapest, fueled by non-governmental funds. It should function year-round, to help countries falling short of meeting democratic criteria to remedy their human rights and democratic deficiencies in order to qualify for CD membership.
- For greater legitimacy, the CD **Convening Group (CG)**, currently 17 countries, should be enlarged to include major democracies such as Brazil, Indonesia, Japan, Germany, France, the UK and other significant democracy assistance donors. There should be periodic elections to the Group by the full CD membership.
- To enable the Convening Group to take effective action, for example to oppose threats to democracy and violations of human rights, the unanimous voting or consensus rule should give way to a **super-majority**, such as a two-thirds vote.
- A smaller **Executive Committee** of the Convening Group should be created. It should coordinate and steer the work of the CD between meetings of the Convening Group.
- CD's **Working Group on Democratic Governance and Civil Society** should work with development ministries and the OECD's Development Assistance Committee to create a forum bringing together the major democracy assistance donor governments to assure coordination, sharing of best practices, and a focus on priority opportunities.

- CD's member states must fund its institutions – the new **Permanent Secretariat** in Warsaw, the **International Center for Democratic Transition** in Budapest, and the **Civil Society Secretariat** of the nongovernmental International Steering Committee in Washington DC - to enable them to coordinate CD activities effectively and organize constructive programs.

A New U.S. Strategy on Global Collaboration to Advance Democracy

Since its creation in Warsaw in 2000, the CD has fallen short of its full potential partly owing to perceptions abroad that it has become to a considerable degree a creature of the U.S. serving its own narrow strategic and foreign policy interests, and that U.S. democracy promotion in recent years has become too ideological, unilateral, and prescriptive. Rightly or wrongly, negative perceptions of a controlling hand from Washington undermined overseas support for democracy-building and eroded American prestige. The Obama Administration will be well-positioned to repair the damage to U.S. standing abroad and to the vital cause of building multilateral cooperation among the democracies.

Some European countries, notably France, have been reluctant to embrace the Community of Democracies – and even the very concept of supporting democracy abroad - due to concerns about Washington's "democracy promotion" agenda of recent years. This put a brake on the contribution of Europe as a whole to the CD, despite the enthusiasm of those in Central and Eastern Europe who have so much to share with the rest of the world from their own transitions from authoritarian rule and of those in Western Europe, such as Sweden and the Netherlands, with longstanding commitments to building democracy abroad.

Alleviating legitimate French and other European concerns would breathe fresh life into the CD by harnessing the power and assets of the European Union. Given Europe's historic record of transforming its continent from the home of a handful of democracies in the 1940s to over three dozen today, and given its enormous political and financial resources, it could play a pivotal role in the CD and in a broader multilateral endeavor to support democratic development. European leadership is especially timely, with the CD Chair currently held by Portugal (2007-9) followed by Lithuania (2009-11). In turn, greater European commitment could encourage other major democracies such as Indonesia, Brazil, and Japan, to play their own important roles. Turning the page under exciting new leadership, the U.S. has a unique opportunity to address reservations in Europe about the concept of democratic solidarity and mutual support and to seek ways of encouraging Europe to contribute meaningfully to the success of the CD. More than any other single step, this could help transform the CD into a valuable pillar of support for the world's democracies.

A clear message must be sent to our European allies, such as France, that the U.S. wants to see the CD become more consequential and effective, and is both ready and anxious to see other democracies in the world lead toward that end. Consultation with our allies should begin early at the sub-Cabinet level, to discuss new approaches (including the possibility that the United States would not be a member of the new Executive Committee of the Convening Group). The Convening Group might be encouraged to meet in Europe or elsewhere on a rotating basis, rather than always in Washington DC. Stimulating an effective multilateral effort is more important and more beneficial to long-term U.S. interests than short-term insistence on U.S. control at the helm.

U.S. initiative and support are essential to assure progress, however the U.S. should be prepared to step back as the CD becomes re-energized, while encouraging others to chart new directions and offer new leadership. In sum, the CD must become more truly multilateral, inclusive, and global.

The Community of Democracies - Poised for Progress and New Leadership

The time is ripe: reluctance to embrace the CD is softening, leading to recent promising signs of progress. A **permanent Secretariat** was created in Warsaw. An **International Center for Democratic Transition (ICDT)** was established in Budapest. A **Democracy Caucus** and a **Democracy Fund** were launched at the UN. **CD Missions** helped troubled democracies such as East Timor. A **CD Diplomat's Handbook for Democracy Development Support** was widely acclaimed and implementation programs are underway in diplomatic training institutes around the world. A **Global Strategic Plan for Democracy Education** is being implemented. CD built a **bridge between African and Latin American** democratic governments, civil societies and their respective regional organizations. An **International Steering Committee** is giving "voice" to civil society, worldwide. These are all solid foundations on which to make the CD a more effective instrument for multilateral cooperation to support democracy.

Alongside the governmental structure of the CD, a **civil society structure**, the International Steering Committee of the CD, which was organized and is led by the Council for a Community of Democracies (CCD), has been instrumental in conceiving and running many of these successful initiatives. This civil society role underscores the fact that the CD is a "bottom up" as much as a "top down" enterprise.

In this respect, the CD resonates with the spirit of the incoming Obama Administration, and with the grassroots political campaign that helped to bring about President-elect Obama's historic election. The CD will look to the Obama Administration for continued affirmation of the **essential role of civil society** in multilateral initiatives to support democracy.

A Summit of the Democracies

A tenth anniversary CD meeting at summit level would ratify and consolidate progress and provide impetus at the highest levels to chart CD's future course and promote its increased success. The summit would highlight President Obama's leadership of the free world through his commitment to multilateralism.

The CD was conceived in 1999 and CD foreign ministers first met in 2000, so the 10th anniversary could be observed in 2009 or 2010. It would be particularly symbolic for the CD summit to coincide with commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin wall in November 2009, which will likely draw many leaders together in Europe.

In pursuing a new strategy built on multilateral engagement and crowned by a tenth anniversary summit, the Obama Administration can make a major contribution to advancing cooperation among the world's democracies for global peace, prosperity, and human progress.

CCD Task Force

This memorandum was produced by an Ad Hoc Task Force of the Council for a Community of Democracies (CCD), an independent non-governmental organization based in Washington DC. The Task Force (listed below) met in October and November 2008 to consider advice to the incoming U.S. Administration on the future of international cooperation among the world's democracies, focusing on recommendations relating to the Community of Democracies.

In the course of its work, members of the Task Force consulted a number of respected experts and practitioners in the U.S. and abroad in the field of support for democracy. While the Task Force took careful account of their opinions, the views and recommendations expressed in the memorandum are those of the Task Force alone.

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