

International Steering Committee



The Nongovernmental
Process of the
Community of Democracies

Paul Graham, Chairman

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STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL INTERNATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE (ISC) OF THE COMMUNITY OF DEMOCRACIES (CD) AT THE UNITED NATIONS DEMOCRACY CAUCUS MINISTERIAL 23RD SEPTEMBER 2010 NEW YORK

AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY:

Your Excellency, Mr. Chairperson; Your Excellencies, Ministers of Foreign Affairs; Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic and Consular Corps; Distinguished State Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen
All protocols respectfully observed

On behalf of all the members of the Non Governmental International Steering Committee (ISC/CD), and indeed on my own behalf, I wish to extend our appreciation to the Chairperson of the Convening Group for affording us this singular opportunity to present a statement at this august gathering of the global community of democracies.

At the outset, I would like to thank the Government and people of Lithuania and indeed the Convening Group of the Community of Democracies for nurturing this collaborative relationship with civil society. Our appreciation also goes to the Secretariat of the Council for the Community of Democracies (CCD) led by Robert LaGamma for facilitating this process.

As a global committee of civil society organizations, networks and advocates working in, on and support democracy and human rights, the ISC of the Community of Democracies comprises over 25 representatives and is coordinated by the Council for a Community of Democracies (CCD) based in Washington, DC.

Your Excellencies,

The ISC commends the Community of Democracies for dedicating this session to gender equality and the human rights of women, and would equally like to congratulate the Convening Group of the Community for the establishment of the Working Group of the Community of Democracies on issues of Gender Equality and the role of women in nascent and established democratic societies sponsored by the Lithuanian Presidency. We applaud the initiative taken by CD members to pay more attention to women's issues and in so doing enhance gender equality around the world.

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Having worked collectively on the issue of Women as it relates to governance; economic empowerment and development; violence; peace and security; political empowerment among others, there is the increasing realization that the attainment of women's human rights is closely linked to achievement of gender equality, with its attendant advantages of peace and security, development and democracy.

Furthermore, many countries around the world have in one way or another taken steps to give life to these aspirations contained in various international, regional and national instruments. We must, however, draw attention to the fact that although there are no shortages in the provisions of these documents, huge discrepancies exist in their implementation.

As we celebrate the International Day of Democracy (September 15) and the International Day of Peace (September 21), it became increasingly clear that disparities still exist particularly in the area of gender equality. Since peace and democracy are inextricably linked, we must acknowledge that the realization of a sustained peace and democracy cannot be achieved without gender equality and the observance of the human rights of women.

This year, therefore, is a year of great opportunity – a year when we, as a community, review the issues of women and gender equality, as highlighted in the UN reviews – Beijing+15, MDG +10, Resolution 1325 +10; CEDAW +30 and together map out strategies for collective and individual actions and interventions. Moreover, we have noted, that although significant resources have been mobilized, progress in most states have remained minimal, slow and fragmented and has consequently not impacted the lives of the majority of women around the world. Rights that are taken for granted in one state remain elusive in another. The ISC would like to take this opportunity to appreciate the latest appointment of a new Under Secretary General (USG) for the UN Women made by the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon. The ISC congratulates Michelle Bachelet and wish her a successful tenure. No doubt, this new development is essential to the effectiveness of the new entity and will hopefully provide new vision that will enable the UN and governments to deliver more effectively on their obligations, as we move towards the 21st century.

Amidst all these developments, we have noted a number of advancements in most of the regions which contextualize gender equality and the human rights of women and would like to applaud the African

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Union for declaring 2010-2020 as the African Women's Decade. It is worthy to also note that the AU has embarked on the development of a Governance Architecture including the development of a human rights strategy for Africa.

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

The ISC hereby call on the members and partners of the Community of Democracies to prioritise and ensure the following actions, namely:

1. The universal ratification (with no reservations), harmonization and implementation of all relevant human rights that impact on the realization of the human rights of women and girls.;
2. The promotion of gender parity policies in leadership and decision making to enable women to effectively influence the relevant systems, structures and institutions;
3. The resourcing of the systems, structures and institutions to be effectively functional and to increase support to the enhancement of women's economic, social, political and cultural empowerment;
4. The elimination of discrimination and violence against women and girls both in times of peace and war;
5. The promotion and implementation of education and training, especially democracy education, as key to the development of women's leadership capacity; and
6. The necessity to take cognizance of the need to provide resources for the working groups set up by the CD, especially the working group on gender equality and the human rights of women, as an avenue to contribute effectively towards the global debate on those issues.

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

With renewed enthusiasm for the success of the working groups, the ISC reaffirms its commitment to the reinforcement of the existing partnership with the UN, States and the international community in matters of democracy and pledges its support towards this endeavour. It further reiterates its call for the Community of Democracies to continue to act in concert and to jealously guard against issues which could have a negative impact on the progress and credibility of such a distinguished body, including such issues as membership of UN and other pertinent regional bodies, particularly in the areas of human rights and democracy, including the Human Rights Council and the Security Council. We remain confident that collectively much change can be achieved in the landscape of democracy and human rights, and more specifically to gender equality within democratic environments. As partners in development, we can together make it happen!

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Your Excellency, Mr. Chairperson

To conclude, I would like to congratulate the Convening Group of the Community of Democracies, under the Lithuania Presidency, for the progress registered thus far and to wish all the members of this distinguished assembly a fruitful deliberation.

Thank You.

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