

(As prepared for delivery)

**Remarks of Madeleine K. Albright
High Level Democracy Meeting of the Community of Democracies
Krakow, Poland
July 3, 2010**

Excellencies and friends, good afternoon.

I am pleased to be here and honored to participate in this, the tenth anniversary of the Community of Democracies. The setting for our gathering could not be more appropriate.

No country is more closely associated with the quest for freedom than Poland and few countries have paid a higher price to secure it. In decades past, the Polish people have had to endure aggression and occupation, partition and massacres. And in recent weeks, they have had to recover from a shocking tragedy.

Democracy's value as a source of national unity has rarely been so dramatically displayed as here in this country over the past two and half months. The plane crash, though devastating, has neither weakened democracy's hold nor lessened Poland's commitment to the rule of law. If further evidence were required, tomorrow is Election Day.

So it is fitting that we return to Poland for the tenth anniversary of the Warsaw Declaration and the Community of Democracies.

When the first conference was held, many predicted that it would be our last. Some felt that such a community was not needed because -- with the Berlin Wall down -- democracy had already triumphed. Others argued that the process of convening a group was undesirable because it would cause friction over whom to include. And still others warned that it would be naïve to place too much faith in democracy when the world would always be governed more by interests than by ideals.

As it happened, the Communities of Democracies proved an extremely successful experiment. Those who came to Warsaw with doubts left with new grounds for enthusiasm.

The primary reason was our host, Foreign Minister Bronislaw Geremek. Mr. Geremek spoke to us from his own life experience concerning the value of freedom and also its fragility. In his welcoming remarks, he declared that "the emergence of democracy was the most important development of the twentieth century." But he also reminded us that the gift of freedom was never fully safe -- because from one direction or another, the principles of freedom will always be opposed.

He argued, therefore, that those who are blessed to live in a democracy have an obligation to repay that blessing by upholding free institutions and by teaching, protecting, and cherishing democratic values.

He urged us to recognize that whether we are going to the polls in Santiago, broadening civil society in Bamako, exercising our right to peaceful dissent in Seoul, or strengthening political parties in Ulan Bator -- we are all part of the same democratic community.

Above all, he taught us that -- in any language -- solidarity is a beautiful concept.

Through solidarity, established democracies can come closer to fulfilling their potential. Struggling democracies can find the help they need to deliver on freedom's promise. And future democracies can draw inspiration in their quest for social progress and political change. This was the Geremek formula for building and preserving democracy. And it is the basis for the 2010 Bronislaw Geremek award.

Father José Conrado Rodríguez is minister to a parish in the impoverished city of Santiago de Cuba. For decades, Father José has served his community as a healer and educator. He felt hope, as did I, when in 1998 Pope John Paul II visited Cuba, prompting memories of that same Pope's visit here to Poland two decades earlier. In his arrival speech, His Holiness prayed: "May Cuba with all its magnificent potential, open itself to the world and may the world open itself to Cuba." Unfortunately, that process of opening has gone forward much more slowly than we had hoped.

In 2005, Father José wrote a letter to President Fidel Castro urging the introduction of democratic mechanisms. Last year, he found it necessary to write again, this time to Raoul Castro, proposing that he respond to change with new approaches and new attitudes.

Father José's eloquence and courage provide a number of lessons that are relevant to the community of democracies. First, they remind us that not every measure taken to support democracy yields the desired results. U.S. law should make democratic change in Cuba easier.

Second, Father Jose reminds us that democracy – at its best – is more than just another system of government. Real democracy is built on a moral foundation. It is based on respect for the rights and dignity of every human being, no matter how humble or how disadvantaged that person might be.

Democracy is grounded in a belief that the legitimate power of governance comes not from the barrel of a gun, or from the means to arrest and to brutalize prisoners, or from the capacity to punish those who dare to voice their discontent. Power, to be legitimate, must come from the people.

More than one hundred years ago, Jose Marti said that "it is my dream for every Cuban to engage in politics in an entirely free manner." I think I speak for everyone associated with the Community of Democracies in expressing my faith that this dream will one day be realized, and that democracy and justice will indeed come to Cuba. When it does, it will be because of the quiet leadership of people such as Father José Conrado, who are showing every day that the real test of a democrat is to respect human dignity and to believe in one another.

That is the standard in which Bronislaw Geremek placed his faith. That is the core premise of the Community of Democracies. And it is why Father José Conrado is a most deserving recipient of this year's Bronislaw Geremek award.

Thank you very much.