

Reinvigorating Democracy Support in an Evolving World

Transatlantic Dialogue on Democracy Support

The Transatlantic Dialogue on Democracy Support is an initiative of the National Democratic Institute (NDI), made possible with the support of the European Commission, the National Endowment for Democracy, the European Parliament's Office for the Promotion of Parliamentary Democracy, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the German Marshall Fund and the European Partnership for Democracy. The dialogue is chaired by former Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright, European Parliament President Jerzy Buzek, former High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana, and former Congressman Vin Weber. The Dialogue was initiated in early 2010 to explore the changing environment for democracy support, as well as lessons learned. Under the leadership of its co-chairs, the dialogue brought together a diverse group of political leaders, academics, policy makers and activists from North America and Europe.

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The Dialogue held its second conference as a new chapter was being written in the history of the Middle East and North Africa. Citizens in Tunisia and Egypt pressed their interim governments for genuine and lasting democratic transitions; Libyans continued their struggle to realize their democratic aspirations despite a brutal crackdown by the country's dictatorial leader; and the peaceful demands of these ordinary citizens, including women and youth, to have a say in their government continued to reverberate throughout the region and across the world. The dialogue participants express their solidarity with the people of the Middle East and North Africa as they seek to fashion their own democratic future. While the situation differs widely from country to country, the dialogue participants forcefully condemn all acts of violence against peaceful demonstrators and express their profound support of the people's legitimate hopes for democratic change, social justice, rule of law and economic development, free from corruption. In addition, the dialogue participants also express solidarity with dissidents and human rights activists in autocratic countries who are fighting to defend universal democratic principles.

The dialogue participants also noted the challenges of developing genuine democratic practices and institutions in these types of political transitions and recognize that traditional, new and emerging democracies alike require constant vigilance. While each democratic system will take on different forms based on its history, culture and traditions, there are common principles shared by all democracies. These include respect for human rights; a free and robust media; a vibrant civil society; strong, effective, and democratic political parties, including a constructive opposition; the rule of law, an independent and competent judiciary; a representative parliament, in which women and men can legislate effectively and can hold the executive to account; a responsive government;

and an electoral process that enjoys the confidence of the citizenry and the political contestants and that reflects the will of the voters.

Addressing these democratic development challenges is essential in advancing human development over the long-term. Human development and democracy are mutually reinforcing. Countries that protect fundamental freedoms and universal principles are most likely to be stable and advance human development and security.

The events in the Middle East and North Africa demonstrate once again that democracy and human rights are universal values, and all democracies share a responsibility to nurture democracy across borders and around the world. All democracies learn from the experiences of other democracies, and democratic activists in non-democratic countries benefit from solidarity with others who have shared similar struggles. The transatlantic community is based on, and has been immeasurably strengthened by, shared democratic values and institutions. This community, along with other democracies, shares a special responsibility to assist those who seek to enjoy the same. Greater partnership and cooperation within the transatlantic community and beyond are essential in developing coordinated responses to emerging opportunities for democratization.

The transatlantic community should elevate democracy assistance within the transatlantic relationship, including the necessary financial resources for this effort. The final report of the Dialogue, incorporating the discussion from the last several days, will be published in the coming months. The report will contain a number of observations and recommendations from the Dialogue that may be useful to the transatlantic community as seeks to deepen its partnerships on this issue. It is hoped that the observations and recommendations contained in the final report of the Dialogue will be further advanced through a number of forums, including the EU-US Summit, the OECD's Development Assistance Committee, the EU-US Development Dialogue, and bilateral cooperation, as well as broader forums such as the Community of Democracies.