

(CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY)

Community of Democracies

**Statement By His Excellency Alberto G. Romulo
Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Philippines
On Behalf of the Community of Democracies' Convening Group (Cape Verde,
Chile, Czech Republic, El Salvador, India, Italy, Republic of Korea, Mali,
Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, South Africa,
United States of America) and Special Guests (Peru and Romania)**

**Geneva, March 12, 2007
at the Fourth Session of the Human Rights Council**

Mr. President,

I speak today as a member of the Convening Group of the Community of Democracies. We take this opportunity to congratulate you, the Bureau, and all of the working group chairs for your collective leadership and guidance during this challenging year of transition and institution building.

The Community of Democracies comprises states from all regional groups. These are states that differ in various respects, such as historic heritage, political, and religious traditions or the level of economic development. We are, however, very proud to share a set of common core values, the crucial one being the belief that democratic governance is a key element for development, security as well as for the promotion and protection of human rights.

The Community of Democracies in its founding Warsaw Declaration affirmed its determination to promote and strengthen democracy. This is based on the conviction that democracy, sustainable development, peace, and respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms are interdependent and mutually reinforcing.

We welcome the establishment of the Human Rights Council (HRC) with the responsibility for promoting universal respect for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction of any kind and in a fair and equal manner.

We are committed to the process of institution building of the HRC and to its timely completion, preferably through consensus. We reaffirm our common endeavour toward the promotion and protection of human rights based on the principles of cooperation and genuine dialogue with the aim of strengthening the capacity of Member States to comply with their human rights obligations for the benefit of all human beings. In this context we encourage states from all regional and political views to overcome their differences and continue to work together to build a strong and efficient system of human rights promotion and protection.

We recognize the important role of civil and non-governmental organizations as well as national human rights institutions in promoting democratic principles and respect for human rights worldwide, including through their participation in Human Rights Council activities. We urge all states to continue to carry out a constructive dialogue and consultations with civil society, and to respect and to protect the independence of NGOs.

We reaffirm our commitment to the promotion and protection of freedom of expression, freedom of the press and freedom of religion and conscience; access to and free exercise of power in accordance with the rule of law; the holding of periodic free and fair elections based on secret balloting and universal suffrage monitored by independent election authorities; freedom of association, including the right to form independent political parties; separation of powers, especially an independent judiciary; and constitutional subordination of all state institutions, including the military, to the legally-constituted civilian authority.

We recognize the importance of the progressive realization, in all countries, of the economic, social, and cultural rights as constituting a solid basis for the economic and political empowerment, including the progressive improvement of the quality of life of all individuals.

We identify the strengthening of democratic governance as an essential component of our efforts to alleviate poverty, support economic growth and sustainable human development, and achieve internationally-agreed-upon goals, including those contained in the Millennium Summit Declaration. While emphasizing the primary responsibility that each country has for its own economic and social development, and the role of national policies and development strategies, we underline the importance of international cooperation and of a democratic, transparent, and enabling economic environment.

We encourage the full participation of women on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, as a fundamental element in the promotion and exercise of a democratic culture.

We believe that tolerance and pluralism are indivisible elements in the promotion and protection of human rights. In this regard, the Community of Democracies encourages the promotion of dialogue among civilizations to strengthen a culture of peace and respect for racial, religious and cultural diversity and to facilitate the full enjoyment of all human rights.

We stress the fundamental role of education as a means of constructing pluralistic and inclusive societies and promoting a culture of tolerance. We encourage states to introduce or expand human rights and democracy education in schools and in institutions of higher learning to reinforce their commitment to promote tolerance and respect for human rights and to fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

Indeed, Mr. President, while much work remains during the closing months of our inaugural year and many new challenges will surely present themselves in the years ahead, we, as the Convening Group of the Community of Democracies, pledge our continued commitment to and observance of the purpose and principles of the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the fundamental principles of international law. We wish you and all members of the Council continued success and look forward to continuing our work in building a strong and responsive Human Rights Council.

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