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President: Mr. Holkeri (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 28

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization

Report of the Secretary-General (A/55/122)

Draft resolution (A/55/L.22/Rev.1)

The President: I call on the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to introduce draft resolution A/55/L.22/Rev.1.

Mr. Nejad Hosseinian (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, let me thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his concise report on the agenda item "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization". I would also like to extend my sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General of the Economic Cooperation Organization and his colleagues for their endeavours to strengthen and expand cooperation between the Economic Cooperation Organization and various bodies and specialized agencies within the United Nations system.

As we all know, in our current global environment the real world is becoming more and more integrated and, in a sense, borderless. In response, both developed and developing countries have found it expedient and inevitable to pool their resources and coordinate efforts to deal with the increasingly

numerous and complicated challenges they face. They have undertaken to establish the necessary institutional frameworks among themselves to strengthen their individual, as well as their collective, capacities to benefit, again individually and collectively, from the potentials and the opportunities of the ongoing and unfolding process of globalization.

Given the state of international discourse on globalization, one hardly needs to emphasize the tremendous impact of the process, which is reshaping the key features of the world economy and global markets in the fields of economy, technology and even culture, and deepening the mutual interdependence of societies.

Simultaneously, an important aspect of these common efforts has been to avoid, to the extent possible, the negative and destabilizing effects of the process. Since few developing countries seem to be in a position to face the challenges of this process, the establishment of regional economic groupings has become the most common and appropriate approach by these countries towards a smooth integration into the world economy. It should be emphasized, however, that policy response to globalization needs to be comprehensive and coherent, both at the regional and at the international levels. Moreover, the establishment and strengthening of regional arrangements in economic, trade and finance areas requires an associated conducive international environment, especially in the field of capacity-building.

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The Economic Cooperation Organization, comprised of 10 developing countries, is a regional arrangement that aims at the expansion and consolidation of economic, technical and technological cooperation among its Member States. The longer term objective is the promotion of common institutions for the smooth movement of goods and capital among the Member States and the facilitation of their gradual integration into the world economy and their active and meaningful participation in the globalization process.

In recent years, expansion of cooperation in the social and cultural fields has also received increasing attention within the Economic Cooperation Organization. The Secretariat of the Economic Cooperation Organization, headquartered in Tehran, has focused its activities on finding the means needed at the regional and international levels to address the common challenges facing the member States, as well as to facilitate the organization's participation in the international economy. The establishment of cooperative arrangements with United Nations bodies and its agencies, funds and programmes in particular has been at the heart of these efforts. This area of fruitful cooperation enjoys huge potential that needs to be further explored and realized.

The geographical position and the economic potential of the Economic Cooperation Organization region, inclusive of oil and gas reserves, abundant mineral resources, as well as a rich cultural and literary heritage, provide the necessary ingredients for sound and sustainable economic growth in various fields within the region and strong economic relations with other neighbouring countries and regional economic groupings. There is also a considerable agricultural potential in the vast lands of the countries of the Economic Cooperation Organization, accommodating both livestock and grain production.

It should be added, however, that political, economic, social and environmental challenges in the region are just as great. The transition from central planning to market-oriented economies is among the important challenges facing some members of the organization. The land-locked status of the Central Asian member States of the organization, an area of pressing challenges for them and the whole organization, calls for the strengthening of the transit infrastructure at the regional level.

The free flow of oil and gas from the area to the world market, if not hampered or distorted by politically-motivated efforts from without, can certainly play a significant role in the overall development of the producing States in the region and contribute to the integration of members of the Economic Cooperation Organization as viable partners in the world economy. The rich cultural and literary heritage of the Economic Cooperation Organization region and the abundant opportunities for cultural development could also contribute to the expansion of tourism and cultural cooperation within the region.

As I indicated just a while ago, the challenges before the region are also quite extensive. The protection of the environment, in particular in the Caspian Sea, the Aral Sea and some other areas in Central Asia, are among the major challenges faced by littoral States and concerned countries in the organization. The Economic Cooperation Organization region is also among the geographical areas that are highly prone to natural disasters, particularly earthquakes and drought. Since last year, drought has inflicted tremendous human casualties, having a devastating impact on the socio-economic infrastructure of the regional countries. The region also continues to be afflicted with the problem of illicit cultivation, production, trafficking and consumption of narcotic drugs, whose serious adverse impact on the social, economic and security structure of the regional countries is known to the international community and hardly needs to be emphasized.

Turning to the question of cooperation with the United Nations system, the growing level and pace of cooperation and joint programmes between the Economic Cooperation Organization and bodies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) is encouraging and need to be further strengthened.

We believe, though, that there remain ample opportunities and unrealized potential for such an expansion. We are confident that new areas of cooperation can be jointly explored and operationalized with other agencies such as the United Nations

Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) in the field of fighting against narcotic drugs, as well as with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Tourism Organization in the area of cultural development and tourism.

I cannot conclude without going back to the menace posed by the illicit cultivation, consumption and trafficking of narcotic drugs in the region. This serious challenge, with its devastating socio-economic impact on the region, is not only a regional problem, but rather a global challenge. And the region has by itself neither the capacity nor the resources to deal effectively and adequately with this menace. Global challenges need global solutions and the commensurate engagement and support of the international community. In this context, cooperation between the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and the United Nations International Drug Control Programme and other intergovernmental and international and regional organizations, especially through supporting the efforts of the transit countries to halt the flow and trafficking of illicit drugs to consuming countries, is imperative. ECO has already taken the necessary first step in this direction through the establishment of a Drug Control Coordination Unit in its Secretariat. Active assistance to the Unit by relevant United Nations agencies, funds and programmes is very much needed in order to combat this rampant region-wide menace effectively.

To conclude, let me draw attention to the draft resolution, "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization", we have before us here. On behalf of the sponsors of the draft resolution, I would like to recommend it for adoption by consensus.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/55/L.22/Rev.1.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/55/L.22/Rev.1.?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 55/42).

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 28?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 39

Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/55/489 and A/55/520)

Draft resolution (A/55/L.32)

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Romania to introduce draft resolution A/55/L.32.

Mr. Ducaru (Romania) (spoke in French): I have the honour to take the floor on a subject of great topicality for the international community as we move from one century and millennium to the next. This subject is the promotion and consolidation of democracy.

We were gratified to see, in early September, our heads of State and Government, gathered in New York for the Millennium Summit, devoting a separate chapter of their declaration on human rights, democracy and good governance to the major role played by the world Organization in the field of democratization, and also making a commitment to promote democracy and consolidate the rule of law and respect for human rights in order to strengthen countries' capacities to apply the principles and practices of democracy. At the same time, they decided to work together for the adoption in all countries of more egalitarian political processes that make possible the effective participation of all citizens in political life.

My country is convinced that the United Nations, because of its universal character, provides an ideal forum in which Member States can work together to refine the functioning of democratic institutions, to strengthen respect for democratic values and to work towards the creation of a genuine democratic culture. We hold this view because we understand democracy as a process that is always subject to improvement and which is nourished not only by the continuing efforts of States to refine it in the light of their own specific

domestic situations — their legislation, their institutions and their decision-making processes — but also by dialogue and international cooperation.

In recent years, the new, democratic Romania has taken an active part in the process initiated by the international conferences of new or restored democracies. This process began in Manila in 1986 and continued to develop in Managua in 1994 and in Bucharest in 1997. Over the years this process has brought together countries from all continents, countries with different traditions and histories, but all imbued with the desire to act together to promote and consolidate democracy, to ensure the respect for and the effective exercise of human rights, fundamental freedoms and good governance, and to establish the rule of law.

The major process of reflection on democratization that was launched by the movement for new or restored democracies has made a substantial and active contribution to the promotion of a common vision of democracy as a key and integral element in development, political and social stability and global peace.

History demonstrates the extent to which democracy and preventive action are the best means of dealing with conflicts in the world and the only way to guarantee that all individuals can fully participate in society. We believe that promoting, maintaining and further strengthening the international debate on the experiences of different countries throughout the world, whether new or old-established democracies, in constructing democracy and on shared values and practices remains a priority aim of our Organization.

In a few weeks' time, my country will hand over to Benin the presidency of the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, which will take place in Cotonou. Presiding over the Conference has been a great honour for Romania and a very enriching experience. Romania, through its efforts to consolidate democracy and ensure respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law so as to build a democratic and pluralist society and a successful market economy, has always tried to contribute to international efforts to promote democratic values and principles.

This year, our initiative relating to the promotion and consolidation of democracy was adopted by the Third Committee, and we would like to thank all those

who made its adoption possible. We believe that it will contribute to strengthening the role of the United Nations in supporting the efforts of Governments to achieve democratization.

The Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, which, for the first time, will take place on the continent of Africa, in Cotonou, Benin, between 4 and 6 December, will deal with issues of peace, security, democracy and development. With wide-ranging international participation, it will take its place within a long tradition. We wish our friends from Benin every success in organizing the Conference and in completing the tasks for which they will be responsible following its conclusion.

Romania has examined with interest the Secretary-General's report (A/55/489) submitted under this agenda item, and congratulates his team for the drafting of the document. We believe that its proposals for strengthening the role of the United Nations and increasing the resources available to enable it to better meet the complex needs resulting from the process of democratization in the world should lead to in-depth reflection on the part of the Member States.

As the current President of the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, Romania has the honour, as it did last year, to introduce — this time, jointly with Benin, the host country of the forthcoming Conference — draft resolution A/55/L.32 under item 39. I am pleased to introduce the draft resolution on behalf of the sponsors listed in the draft resolution. The following countries have also expressed their wish to become sponsors: Albania, Argentina, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Burundi, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, India, Kenya, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Namibia, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Peru and Ukraine.

In the preambular part of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would recall events and documents pertaining to the process undergone by new and restored democracies, in particular the Millennium Declaration, adopted on 8 September this year, and would take note of the progress that has been made this year. In the operative part of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report and invite States to give due attention to the proposals that it contains, including during the Fourth International Conference on New or Restored Democracies. At the same time,

the General Assembly would invite Member States and the agencies and bodies of the United Nations to participate in the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies in Cotonou, Benin, next month. On behalf of the sponsors, I should like to express the hope that this draft resolution will be adopted, as in the past, by consensus.

The President: I now call on the representative of Benin to introduce draft resolution A/55/L.32.

Mr. Adechi (Benin) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to introduce the draft resolution entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies". It will be a privilege for Benin to welcome the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies. It will also be a tribute to my country for our efforts in bringing about the peaceful restoration of democracy in February 1990, following the Conference of the Active Forces of the Nation, whose influence was felt throughout Africa and the world.

I should like to take this opportunity, on behalf of my Government, to thank all the States and institutions that have helped us to organize the International Conference. Democracy is developing and spreading throughout the continent and is now becoming universally accepted. We could say that modern history is the history of the progress of democracy from its development to its consolidation. However, the development of democracy has not been without its setbacks. Progress is not always direct, and often there are periods of disappointment. The history of democracy includes compromise and economic crisis, and it is sometimes abandoned altogether.

That is why, having followed different paths towards democracy, representatives from over 100 countries will be meeting in Cotonou, Benin, in a few weeks' time in order to reaffirm their belief in democracy and to evaluate what is at stake and the challenges facing democratic societies and the democratization process at the dawn of the new millennium.

In hosting the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, Benin would like to offer a forum in which a fruitful discussion can take place on the great challenges of democracy, considering it as an ongoing process that transforms society and, therefore, the world. Democracy is particularly sensitive to

economic crises, which can make the return to an authoritarian solution seem tempting. That is the problem of young democracies facing the contradictions of underdevelopment and institutional shortcomings. We must also be concerned about the growing powerlessness of young democracies, characterized by decreasing initiative with regard to questions relating to their future or their survival.

How can we support young democracies so as to root them sustainably and stably in the democratic process? That is what concerns us.

Following the very relevant recommendations of the Secretary-General, Benin has invited States from the whole continent to deliberate and to propose solutions. Once again, we would like to thank the Secretary-General for the ongoing interest that he has shown in initiatives to support efforts to consolidate democracy in the world.

The draft resolution before us today is aimed at encouraging the Organization in its efforts to help young democracies consolidate themselves and help them to adopt common practices. Therefore, in support of this movement, I appeal to the Assembly to adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

Mr. Bossière (France) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries of Cyprus, Malta, Turkey, as well as Iceland and Liechtenstein, which are countries of the European Free Trade Association and members of the European Economic Area, also support this statement.

The examination of this agenda item on the eve of the Cotonou Conference on New and Restored Democracies — and may I here welcome the efforts of the Benin authorities to ensure the success of that Conference, which will also be a success for Africa — affords the European Union an opportunity to express its support for the efforts within the United Nations framework to support the efforts of Governments that are embarking upon, continuing or resuming the road of democracy.

It is indeed important that the United Nations, because of its universal dimension, should be the primary forum for reflection by the international

community in this area and that, with its wealth of varied experience, the United Nations system should support the efforts of States that are now engaged in processes of democratization.

Democracy means adherence to basic principles, and the European Union has already had an opportunity, in the Third Committee, on the occasion of the adoption of the Romanian draft resolution on the promotion and consolidation of democracy, to emphasize its commitment to the reaffirmation of these shared values.

However, if we wish effectively to support the efforts of young democracies, we should not lose sight of the fact that democracy is, before all else, a process, the fruit of a complex progression in which a variety of human, economic, social and cultural factors all come into play.

Without an understanding of these processes and, in particular, without knowledge, adapted to each situation, of the players and the factors that enter into play in the construction of every democracy, how indeed would it be possible to lend effective support to, and underpin, the processes that are under way? How would it be possible to foster the burgeoning of new processes?

The European Union has noted with the keenest interest the report of the Secretary-General, prepared at the request of the General Assembly, and of the recommendations it contains. The report contains some very high-quality thinking on the various elements involved in the establishment of a democratic culture and a democratic society. It rightly emphasizes that any process of democratization implies a radical transformation of values and cannot be limited to the establishment of new procedures and institutions. It is important that every people should be able to exercise its own values and identify the best possible practices for ensuring the success of the processes of democratization.

The European Union wishes to take this opportunity to briefly emphasize a number of elements that guide its action at the international level in this area.

Democracy means, in essence, the effective participation of the people. Thus, the report rightly mentions social development and the emancipation of women as being among the important factors that can

help to foster and underpin democracy. The report similarly emphasizes the importance of strengthening civil society and the emergence of a human rights culture in order to consolidate democracy. It is indeed essential that the exercise of fundamental rights and freedoms, without which the expression of the people's will is impossible, should be guaranteed and protected and that an effort to educate and inform citizens should be undertaken. Support for the various players involved in democratization is, in this regard, of primary importance.

The construction of democracy is also a process that cannot be separated from the process of State-building. In this regard, actions helping to establish the rule of law and the good management of public affairs, the training of public officials, the construction of solid and independent judiciaries, the transparency of appropriate institutional mechanisms that are accountable for their decisions, and education all help, *inter alia*, to contribute to sustaining democratic processes. The European Union attaches high priority to such actions in its development policies.

After all, there is not just one road to democracy; nor is there an instant recipe or pre-established guaranteed model. In this connection, the European Union would like to endorse the distinction drawn by the report between elections and democratization. The European Union has had many opportunities to lend its support to electoral processes, which always represent an important stage in the building of democratic processes, though not the only element of those processes. The electoral process presupposes a host of favourable conditions in which the environment, the role of the media, the emergence of different political forces, the existence of genuine political debate and the involvement of people who are aware of their rights are essential. Finally, as the report emphasizes, the orderly conduct of elections cannot mark the final stage of international assistance. Anything done to promote democracy must be part of a long-term undertaking.

The road to democracy is open to all and reflects a universal aspiration. The European Union includes among its members a number of States that have travelled the long and difficult road towards democracy. Every State and people is capable of carrying out this process and of making this journey. The European Union welcomes the choice made in this regard by the people of Yugoslavia, who opted for

democracy on 24 September under particularly difficult conditions.

The European Union would like to take this opportunity of addressing the General Assembly to extend its special congratulations to the Secretary-General on the in-depth reflection he is undertaking, which is based on an open and careful approach that takes into account the multiplicity of players and factors that contribute to the emergence and consolidation of sustainable democracy.

The European Union believes that the United Nations has a specific role to play in simultaneously promoting the principles and supporting the processes of democracy. Democracy is by its very essence inclusive and respectful of the views of all. In this regard, the European Union welcomes the fact that the organizers of the Cotonou Conference of New or Restored Democracies have opened that event to all Member States of the Organization without exception, as well as to the specialized agencies and bodies of the United Nations and to many regional organizations that have a role to play in this area. The member States of the European Union will be pleased to respond to the invitation to attend. Thinking about democracy in all its complexity means we must be modest in our views. I believe we can say as a sign of solidarity that, in a certain way, we are all new democracies.

Mr. Yel'chenko (Ukraine): This is a good opportunity to present the views of my delegation on how the United Nations system can enhance and support the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new and restored democracies.

Democratization is one of the most popular and frequently used words today. We have become very proficient in drafting universal and regional documents in which the most fundamental principles of democracy are enshrined. We can take pride in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenants on Human Rights and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Helsinki Final Act, as well as hundreds of international, regional or specialized conventions and protocols in the field of human rights. Just 10 days ago, the Third Committee recommended to the General Assembly for adoption almost 70 draft resolutions on human rights and related issues. This creative involvement of the entire United Nations membership

serves as an important element of the democratization process throughout the world.

Mr. Vohidov (Uzbekistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

It is true that the United Nations is covering practically all possible contingencies that may threaten democracy. They are designed to nurture civil society, protect the rights of women and children and of national and other minorities, promote freedom of the press and protect other specific rights and freedoms. Regional organizations are also very much involved in ensuring that these universal values are put into practice in many parts of the world.

One could hardly find a country in the world that would call itself undemocratic. But let us recognize that we may still mean different things when we say "democracy". There is an urgent need to develop a common denominator for democratic values, a global system of coordinates to measure individual progress on the road towards democracy that recognizes that each nation must traverse this path on its own.

Globalization makes it obvious that effective cooperation between nations can be achieved only on the basis of universal democratic values. Extending such values would be the best way to guarantee that global development proceeds in a non-conflict environment. That is not an easy task, for it requires our common efforts to create civilized norms for our relations.

We note the fact that the United Nations is more engaged today in protecting democracy all over the world, through the provision of electoral assistance and its special governance programmes, as well as by monitoring human rights. In this connection, Ukraine fully supports the relevant provisions of the well-known Brahimi report which stipulate that building democracy on a substantial basis should be the key component of all peace missions and of other United Nations activities.

As a representative of one of the States with restored democracies, I would like to touch on some recent aspects of Ukraine's democratic development. Let me underline that democratic traditions and those related to the protection of human rights have deep historic roots indeed in Ukraine. After Christianity was embraced almost 10 centuries ago, the head of State, Prince Volodymyr, abolished the death penalty. By the

beginning of the seventeenth century, the Ukrainian Kozak Republic had become one of the first historically authentic democracies in Europe. That took place after the Ukrainian *het'man* Pylyp Orlyk, the head of State, authored the first democratic Constitution of Ukraine, which provided not only for a clear allocation of power, but also fully promoted personal rights and freedoms.

This is one of the historical reasons for Ukrainians today to fully appreciate the value of democracy. Because democracy was absent from Ukraine for centuries, the Ukrainian people suffered from endless oppression, foreign domination, totalitarian dictatorships and even from man-made famine in the 1930s, which was the worst case of human and intellectual genocide of the last century. Throughout these hardships Ukrainians longed for their independence while passing their unfulfilled longing for freedom from generation to generation.

Today Ukraine is one of the few newly independent States to have been spared ethnic conflict or unrest. Ukraine has achieved a lot in a very short time to ensure that the process of democratic reform gained momentum and became irreversible.

The rule of law and the supremacy of the constitution have become the guiding principles of our political reality. Presidential and parliamentary elections have been conducted in what has been fully recognized as a democratic fashion. The formation last February of a democratic majority in the parliament of Ukraine has created a favourable environment for enhancing the effectiveness of the law-making process. Civic peace and public accord have been maintained, strengthening the foundations of civil society.

The multi-ethnic Ukrainian society comprises more than 100 nationalities, who live together, enjoying the right to preserve their national identity. Among them are Russians, Poles, Hungarians, Jews, Belorussians, Romanians, Bulgarians, Moldovans and many others. Nine years ago, as a key part of our national rebirth, we proclaimed the principle that you should be as good to your neighbour as you wish your neighbour to be to you, which is still entirely valid. A persuasive argument in favour of that policy is the manner in which Ukraine, in cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, resolved the problem of the nearly 300,000 Crimean

Tatars and members of other nationalities deported from our land during the totalitarian regime.

Being not only a consumer but also a provider of security, stability and democracy, Ukraine shares the knowledge it has acquired by further projecting the reach of democracy. The group comprising Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Moldova is a visible new example of multifaceted cooperation incorporated into the very idea of a community of democracies. States participating in that group are committed to the fundamental norms and principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter. Those countries uphold the rule of law, democratic governance, civil society and the market economy in order to integrate fully into European economic and political structures. That is reflected in the development of their relations with the European Union and other European institutions. Uniting themselves with the advanced democracies, the group's countries foster democratic values within their own territories. Reciprocally, they share their democratic knowledge with nascent democracies.

Our other European partners in this field have a lot in common: they have similar aspirations and are very often faced with similar challenges. The series of international conferences of new and restored democracies, the most recent one held in Bucharest, have provided all of us with the opportunity to exchange relevant international, regional and individual experiences.

During the conference on the theme "Towards a community of democracies" held recently at Warsaw, we further developed, supplemented and enriched mutual understanding and global solidarity in our commitment to democracy. The participants also agreed that it was necessary to go a step further rather than simply to affirm the importance of democracy for human rights and for the well-being of societies.

We urge that this useful discussion continue next month at Cotonou. In our opinion, that forum, to be held in the capital of Benin, should elaborate new initiatives and give us an additional impetus to speed up and broaden the process of democratization on a global scale, with, inter alia, the support of the United Nations.

Mr. Ling (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): At the start of a new century and a new millennium, ensuring the universality of democratic principles and norms is

among the central objects of philosophical reflection, academic study and international relations. It is no accident that the hopes and aspirations of the peoples of the United Nations were the basis of the important millennium report of the Secretary-General (A/54/2000) discussed by our heads of State or Government at the Millennium Summit.

Belarus sees great symbolic significance in the fact that it is here at the United Nations — the world's most democratic forum for international diplomacy — that Member States are discussing further efforts by the international community and the United Nations system to strengthen new or restored democracies. Belarus considers that the United Nations should be the instrument for promoting dialogue among civilizations, building a culture of peace, guaranteeing the primacy of law and uniting all States around democratic principles and ideals. That is an immeasurably difficult task. We regard progress towards democracy as the natural way for States and societies to develop; it has both economic and political components. Solving economic and social problems is a key factor in creating not just theoretical but genuine democracy. Imposing recipes for democracy from outside on the pretext of helping States, and the division of States into two categories — civilized and uncivilized, or teachers and pupils — are counterproductive, especially in terms of attaining the ultimate goal: building a genuinely democratic society — not to mention in terms of the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter.

The Republic of Belarus is surely one of the youngest democracies in the world. As a democracy, Belarus is not yet 10 years old. Is that a long time or a short one? It has been long enough for our country to become a stable and reliable State of Eastern Europe. For the sake of the welfare of our own people and of the other peoples of Europe, we have voluntarily renounced nuclear weapons. We have signed the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and have established independent Government institutions. We believe that a stable Belarus, where the people's choices underlie the policies of the President and the Government, is important for lasting European peace and stability.

Looked at from another perspective, 10 years is not enough time to perfect democracy. In that connection, we agree with the finding of the Stockholm-based International Institute for Democracy

and Electoral Assistance that there is no single solution to the problems of democratization. Local conditions, traditions and lifestyles need to be considered because they are essential elements in defining international criteria for evaluating a society's level of democracy. Here, we believe that the United Nations must be in the vanguard.

This has been a special year in Belarus in terms of the development of democracy. For the first time in our history as a sovereign State, we have had full-scale elections to the lower house of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus. Preparations for the election campaign involved an enormous amount of work by all the country's political institutions. The result of that work was the adoption of the electoral code of the Republic of Belarus, which incorporates the experience of the world's longest-standing parliamentary democracies.

Given the participation of more than 200 independent international observers of the Belarus elections, one notes with some regret that the United Nations did not find it possible to send its own experts to Belarus. Largely for financial reasons, the relevant Secretariat departments have in recent years considerably reduced the level of their election-observation activities in Member States. We are convinced that that needs to be remedied, and that the United Nations should respond positively to invitations from States to participate in the development of their democratic institutions.

In response to the appeal of the Secretary-General, the Republic of Belarus intends to play an active role in the forthcoming Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies scheduled to take place at Cotonou, Benin, from 4 to 6 December 2000. We hope, and indeed are convinced, that the Conference will make a substantial contribution to the development of practical international cooperation in this sphere, on the basis of broadly acceptable principles that show respect for the national identity of every nation.

Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia): At the outset, I wish to join previous speakers in expressing gratitude to the Secretary-General for the preparation of the report contained in document A/55/489 on the current agenda item. It contains useful information on the activities that have taken place as a follow-up to the Third International Conference of New or Restored

Democracies, held in Bucharest in 1997, as well as on the preparations for the Fourth Conference, to be held in Cotonou next month.

Entering the new millennium, we are facing numerous challenges, the promotion and consolidation of new and restored democracies being one of them. In the course of the last decade, an ever-increasing number of countries, including those with economies in transition, have embraced democracy as their preferred form of governance. Although it is obvious that no system of governance can claim perfection, democracy is considered today the best form of governance that is known. The experience of many countries has shown that democracy upholds the rule of law, ensures respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and makes Governments accountable to citizens and decision-making transparent. On the other hand, not all Governments have succeeded in living up to democratic standards and providing the freedom and conditions necessary for everyone to participate fully in their political, economic and social life. Many new or restored democracies still need support and assistance in their efforts to promote and consolidate their democratic choice and standards.

In this regard, the series of International Conferences of New or Restored Democracies is playing an increasing role. In 1988 in Manila, 13 Governments participated in the First Conference; their number has now increased considerably, reaching 80 at the Third Conference, held in Bucharest in 1997.

An important outcome of this series of Conferences is the initiative to jointly work out a code of democratic conduct on the basis of existing international standards. Mongolia believes that the General Assembly will soon be able to consider the draft code and adopt it. A universally accepted code of democratic conduct, representing a basic set of democratic norms for Governments, will, in our view, also contribute to the affirmation of a culture of democracy.

Over the past 10 years of democratic reforms, we Mongolians have been able to considerably broaden our understanding of and knowledge about democracy and good governance. Major steps have been taken in building the institutions of democracy, promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms and unleashing people's entrepreneurial and creative energy, thus facilitating their active participation in the

economic, social and political processes. One of the most valuable achievements of democratization has been the change in people's attitudes towards the Governments and themselves, as well as in their ways of thinking.

On 4 July 2000, democratic parliamentary elections were held in Mongolia. The elections were recognized as free and fair by all political forces, as well as international observers, and served as a testimony to further consolidation of democratic norms and institutions in my country. They proved once again that the embrace of democracy and respect for human rights are an irreversible choice of the Mongolian people. The new Government underlined the continuity of policies of democratic reforms. It further underlined the importance of enhancing the effectiveness, transparency and accountability of public offices and the importance of fighting corruption. The Government is determined to closely cooperate with non-governmental organizations and other representatives of civil society in enhancing the rule of law throughout the country.

Mongolia commends the many forms of assistance provided by the United Nations system to new and restored democracies, ranging from its support for elections and promotion of democratic values to institution- and capacity-building for democratization. Thus, in Mongolia the programme on decentralization and democracy support is being actively implemented in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme.

In conclusion, I wish to take this opportunity to reiterate Mongolia's offer to host the next Conference of New or Restored Democracies in Mongolia, in Ulaanbaatar. It is our strong belief that these Conferences contribute to the sharing of valuable experiences of democratic processes in the countries of new and restored democracies. Mongolia will continue to support and participate in this unique process.

Mr. Al-Adoufi (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): During the past few years, democratic concepts and ideas have spread all over the world. We have witnessed the continuous growth of democracy at the global level, which aims at promoting and strengthening political, economic and social stability. The spread of these international values should not be separated from the particularities of each society, in accordance with its history and culture.

Political plurality, separation of powers, market economy, human rights, fundamental freedoms, respect for and protection of these freedoms and promotion of the rule of law, improving the legal framework of States, improving the social cohesion of societies, participation of the organizations of civil society in the development of democracy, good governance, employment opportunities and better standards of living for the population, could not develop further unless they are aimed at increasing economic growth and combating poverty so that democracy and development can become inseparable.

My delegation greatly appreciates the Secretary-General's report contained in document A/55/489, which deals in general with the endeavours made by the United Nations in this area and reviews the entire process of establishing democracies and the role played by the International Conferences of New or Restored Democracies. I would like to affirm once again that we are fully committed to democratic principles and are very serious about our continuing cooperation with the United Nations in supporting efforts to bring about democracy and to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies.

In this context, I should like to mention the International Forum for Emerging Democracies, which was held in San'a in June 1999, with the participation of 16 countries and of representatives from various political parties, the press, intellectuals, scholars, trade unions and syndicates of those countries that have emerging democracies. The Forum made a significant contribution to the activities undertaken by the International Conferences for New or Restored Democracies.

Democracy, diversity of options, equality, respect of the individual and consolidation of the pillars of democratic institutions, the exercise by the people of their sovereign rights through free, fair and periodic elections, a free press and organizations of civil society — all of this has been achieved in Yemen through democratic institutions and the strength of popular participation in two rounds of parliamentary elections and one round of presidential elections. These were all conducted in a free and fair manner, according to the testimony of international and local observers.

The democratic process in my country has become an important part of our daily life, giving broader horizons to the development of Yemeni society

in the political, social and economic fields in the twenty-first century.

Mr. Halperin (United States of America): I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Government of the United States, to speak in strong support of the draft resolution and to congratulate the Government of Benin on hosting the upcoming Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies.

It is indeed a sign of the times that this body is called upon, with increasing regularity, to consider draft resolutions related to democracy. The recent adoption by an overwhelming vote in the Third Committee of the resolution introduced by Romania on promoting and consolidating democracy marked another milestone in the United Nations' support for democracy.

The International Conference of New or Restored Democracies has provided an important venue for emerging democracies to come together to discuss common challenges and to chart a new future. It has called to the world's attention the inextricable link between democracy and development and the pivotal contribution of good governance and the rule of law to building more democratic, peaceful, prosperous and stable societies. It has reminded us that while the aspirations for democracy take many different forms and speak many different languages, these hopes arise in every region and in every civilization. We applaud the efforts made under previous chairmanships — the Philippines, Nicaragua, and Romania — in making the Conference of New or Restored Democracies a significant event on the international stage.

The Conference of New or Restored Democracies has been an inspiring testament to the stunning growth of democracy around the world during the last decades of the twentieth century. But it also reminds us of the need for the international community, including the United Nations, to help ensure that these often difficult democratic transitions are ultimately successful.

To this end, we welcome the report to the Secretary-General which is now before us, and we applaud his comments on the ways in which the United Nations can help strengthen democracy. We look forward to the discussions at the forthcoming Benin Conference of New or Restored Democracies. More robust democratic institutions, processes and values are, we believe, integral to achieving this body's most

noble aspirations. Support from the United Nations, which can take many forms, gives encouragement and much-needed assistance to those in government and in civil society around the world who are striving to build durable democratic systems, often under difficult circumstances.

The Conference of New or Restored Democracies is one prominent example of how global and regional organizations can lend support to undertakings designed to strengthen democracy.

Another example is the Community of Democracies, which held its first ministerial meeting last June in Warsaw, Poland. The United States Government was honoured to have joined Poland, Chile, the Czech Republic, India, Mali and the Republic of Korea in bringing to fruition this first-ever gathering of Governments that have chosen the democratic path. More than 100 Governments took part, representing every region, every culture, and every level of development and historical legacy. They endorsed a declaration of principles — the Warsaw Declaration — embodying ideals and concrete practices common to all democracies. They pledged in Warsaw to adhere to these principles and to cooperate to strengthen democracy in States which have chosen the path to democracy.

The United States Government is committed to working at the United Nations and in regional organizations with countries which share these ideals to advance democracy and human rights. In that spirit, I would like to mention the close collaboration between a number of the Governments involved in the Warsaw and Cotonou conferences, most notably Benin and Romania, and members of the Community of Democracies convening group. This collaboration has resulted in welcome synergy between the two conferences, symbolized by the discussion that is to take place in Cotonou on ideas for the agenda for the next meeting of the Community of Democracies, to be held in Seoul in 2002.

In addition, my Government has worked closely on a bilateral basis with the Government of Benin to ensure a productive conference in Cotonou. One sign of the United States commitment to a successful outcome is our sending a high-level delegation to the Benin Conference, chaired by our Under-Secretary for Global Affairs, Frank Loy.

We believe the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies and the Community of Democracies are mutually reinforcing and beneficial. They are united in common purpose in viewing democracy as the essential precondition for a more peaceful, prosperous, and just world.

We look forward to a fruitful Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies and to the opportunity to deepen existing international cooperation to strengthen democracy.

Mr. Sun Joun-yung (Republic of Korea): I would like at the outset to take this opportunity to extend my delegation's appreciation to the Government of Romania for its excellent leadership in advancing the cause of democracy, particularly in the follow-up process of the Bucharest Conference. I would also like to commend Secretary-General Kofi Annan for producing the comprehensive report entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies".

The spread of democracy since the end of the cold war has been one of the most heartening trends of our times. During the last decade alone, a growing number of countries around the world have adopted democratic forms of government and more people today live in democracies than ever before in history. Despite such encouraging trends, civil wars and regional disputes still dominate the headlines. Moreover, we are facing a new challenge in the consolidation of democracy, which the Secretary-General, in his address to parliamentarians in August this year, termed the "fig-leaf democracy". Nevertheless, all things considered, we can assert that the move towards democratization has taken root as a universal norm and practice at both the national and global levels.

It is our conviction that such a development has been made possible largely due to the key role played by the United Nations, particularly through its assistance in elections and the promotion of democratic values, as well as through the Organization's work in human rights. In this regard, we would like to stress the importance of implementing the Millennium Declaration, particularly its section V concerning human rights, democracy and good governance. All Member States should strive to strengthen their

capacity to adhere to the principles and practices of democracy and respect for human rights.

My delegation shares the view expressed by the majority of Member States that democracy, development, peace and human rights are essentially interlinked and mutually reinforcing. There is a growing consensus that fundamental elements are to be found in both democracy and development, such as good governance, respect for human rights and the rule of law. Furthermore, democracies are less prone to fighting each other, for they inherently support the cause of peace. Peace, in turn, is a prerequisite for development, in the absence of which there can be no democracy, and vice versa. These priorities are therefore intrinsically interrelated. The absence of one hinders the development of the others, and societies that lack basic well-being tend to fall into conflict.

In this regard, my delegation is in full agreement with the statement in the Secretary-General's report arguing that democracy or lack thereof is at the root of many of today's violent conflicts, the majority of which are internal. Hence, there is a growing need to address the issue of democratization in state-building and peace-building operations. Only by our successfully handling democracy-related issues in peace missions will long-lasting peace and post-conflict reconstruction and development be achieved.

In this context, we highly appreciate the recommendations proposed in the expert report of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. We are of the view that the potential of the United Nations to contribute to the cause of democracy will be reached only once the challenges identified in the report are overcome, including the development of a comprehensive and holistic approach to democracy. Foremost, it must be able to coordinate the actions of various departments and agencies within the United Nations system in order to avoid costly overlaps. Taking this opportunity, my delegation would like to reaffirm the strong commitment of the Republic of Korea to supporting the United Nations in implementing these forward-looking recommendations.

The Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies will take place in Cotonou, Benin, from 4 to 6 December this year, for the first time in Africa. We hope that it will provide the international community with a momentous opportunity to achieve significant advances in the

promotion and consolidation of democracy through the exchange of lessons learned and best practices. The Benin Conference, following the Manila, Managua and Bucharest Conferences, has adopted the theme "Democracy, Peace, Security and Development," which to our view is remarkably timely and appropriate. In this regard, we note with satisfaction the efforts under way to ensure the success of the Conference, particularly the initiatives taken by the United Nations system, such as the support of the United Nations Development Programme in planning and organizing the Conference. As requested by the Secretary-General, it is our sincere hope that the aforementioned recommendations of the International Institute will be addressed during the Benin Conference in a methodical and comprehensive manner.

The Republic of Korea, in an effort to contribute to the promotion and consolidation of democracy, has decided to host the Second International Conference of the Community of Democracies, to be held in October 2002 in Seoul. As members are well aware, the First Conference, entitled "Towards a Community of Democracies", was held in Warsaw, Poland, on 25 to 27 June this year with the assistance of other co-convening countries, including my country. The Republic of Korea hopes that the Second Conference will build on the growing international momentum towards greater democracy and lay a solid foundation for the furtherance of democracy around the globe.

Finally, I would like to add that, despite the progress we have achieved so far, much work has yet to be done. We ought to keep in mind that the process of democratization is inherently slow and at times discouraging. It is therefore imperative that we maintain our patience and all the more important for us to join our efforts and work collaboratively to achieve a world of peace and prosperity in which democracy may thrive.

Mr. Flores Lovo (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Government of Nicaragua, I am very happy to congratulate Mr. Holkeri on his assumption of his high office and for the distinguished work he has been doing as President of the General Assembly.

The Government of Nicaragua would like to stress the importance of the United Nations system's support for Governments that are pushing the new and restored democracies movement, in particular through the management of the United Nations Development

Programme — a body which has allocated approximately half of its budget to promoting programmes in the political, economic and social fields.

Nicaragua welcomes the holding of the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, to be held in Cotonou, Benin, in December 2000. Likewise, we are happy to congratulate the distinguished Government of Benin for their work in holding such a major event and are very happy to see the support that they have received from the United Nations Development Programme.

We reiterate our decisive support for the cycle of conferences of new or restored democracies and the follow-up mechanisms established at these conferences, which fortunately have received help from the United Nations and have encouraged our Governments to continue fighting to work towards the consolidation of democracy.

We recognize the outstanding work that has been done by the countries comprising the movement of new or restored democracies. We would encourage them to continue fighting in this complex process in order to install or re-establish democracy as a medium of expression of the voice of the people and of peaceful social living together.

Nicaraguan society has confronted and overcome very many obstacles in a difficult process of transition towards a participatory democracy, in a spirit of tolerance and peaceful coexistence between the various political spheres. However, we still have many challenges to overcome, and there is still much work to be done. This is why we state our commitment to concentrate on overcoming mistakes and shortcomings in order to face up to the challenges presented by the consolidation of democracy.

Nicaragua considers that it is of vital importance to continue promoting the broad participation of all social, political and economic spheres in the country, without exception, in the process of decision-making and in the planning and organization of national strategies and plans so that they will be directed towards achieving good performance of a transparent public administration, towards productive development and towards the building of a common future.

We aspire to be given fairer treatment by international financial institutions, so that by

redesigning the structural adjustment programmes we would be able to make firm progress towards a reduction of poverty and towards economic stability, which brings with it the political and social stability that will take us towards sustainable development and the consolidation of democracy.

We would stress that there is an urgent need to promote civic education to teach future and present generations about democratic values. We insist on promoting democratic culture and will work hard to preserve the peace that has cost us so dearly to build and consolidate.

We are promoting all efforts aimed at bringing together the general public and civil servants so as to encourage full participation of these various sectors of society, respect for political pluralism and the need to continue to strengthen democratic institutions and make them more professional.

We encourage the modernization and professionalization of the administration of justice, as well as the adaptation of our legislation to the needs raised by our participation in a globalized world. As a result, we promote the strengthening of the rule of law that can provide us with legal security in society, that favours a climate that will attract private investment, and that increases confidence in the legal order of the State as the indispensable basis for all democratic societies.

We have promoted the respect for human rights and the full development of the fundamental freedoms of our citizens. We would stress in this respect the will of Nicaragua to promote the open development of the freedom of expression. In this context, we encourage the press to be objective and act responsibly so that it can participate actively in the process of democratic consolidation, while carrying out critical and constructive monitoring of public administration.

We are committed to protecting the independence of the branches of government, to promoting the development of local governments and to working further to improve their organization, level of professionalism and efficiency.

On 5 November 2000 the first municipal elections held separately from general national elections were carried out in Nicaragua. The process included the broad participation of observers and national and international observation missions, as well as the help

of prominent personalities on the international scene and representatives of civic and regional organizations, along with special missions from friendly countries.

The observers that I have mentioned were able to count on the full support of the Supreme Electoral Council, the national body in charge of organizing and directing the electoral process. Likewise, this body provided full information on the process and broad dissemination of the results, both to the observers and to the national and international press. I think that this shows our intent to promote transparent electoral processes and the desire of Nicaraguan people to express their will through universal suffrage.

We would like to thank the Organization for the official development assistance that it has given to Nicaragua and all of the help that the international community has given us in the face of the devastating natural disasters that have afflicted Nicaragua in recent years.

Despite all of the adversity that we have faced on the road towards democracy, we know that we are not alone in our battle. We rely on international support for and understanding of our efforts to continue to build a solid and sustainable democratic society.

Finally, we enthusiastically welcome the holding of the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies. We would encourage all participants to develop an active exchange of experiences and to work together towards the creation of a more just and democratic world.

Mr. Alemán (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his concise and useful report on support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies, contained in document A/55/489.

Democracy is a concept composed of realities and ideals. Democracy is therefore a system that is subject to an ongoing process of construction and improvement. When a country acquires, or reacquires, a democratic system, it understands better how democracy provides an environment in which the fundamental rights and freedoms of human beings can best flourish, since the participation of the people should take the form not only of involvement in the State's political decision-making process, but of the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights.

Democracy, development and respect for human rights are interdependent and strengthen each other. On the other hand, democracy originates in the free will of all peoples to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural system. That is why the current Constitution of Ecuador stipulates that the State has a paramount duty to guarantee the democratic system, eradicate poverty and promote economic, social and cultural progress and to respect and ensure respect for human rights—not only those enshrined in its political charter, but also those set out in the declarations, pacts, covenants and other international instruments in force.

Through its periodic plans and programmes, Ecuador is adopting measures to ensure the effective exercise of these rights. Ecuador's national human rights plan, approved by executive decree number 1527 of 29 March 1998, is the most comprehensive and ambitious programme in this area. An operational plan of action and a standing committee for follow-up and development have been set up to carry out the programme.

Since my country emerged in 1979 from a long, dark period of military dictatorship, democratic institutions have been subjected to harsh trials. But they have survived all difficulties and, through its legislation, Ecuador has found appropriate ways and means of preserving the life of the Republic and the rule of law.

Democracy cannot be reduced merely to the convention of holding elections every so often. Democracy—participatory democracy, with social justice and freedom—must give positive meaning to the action of the State and sufficient and valid reasons to its citizens to commit themselves to the defence of democracy.

Governments cannot fail to fulfil the expectations of their people. But they also require international assistance and the support of the international financial institutions so that they can organize their economies and carry out their social programmes. All Governments have an urgent social debt to their peoples. But in some cases they are unable to concentrate their efforts on that duty because over half of their national budget goes to paying off the external debt and to debt servicing.

Any nation that lacks the resources to take care of its economic and social needs, that is witnessing a

constant rise in illiteracy and disease and that is also suffering from an ongoing increase in unemployment, poverty and underdevelopment will find its internal peace and stability threatened. Where there is poverty there can be no stability or development. This truth should not be forgotten by the geostrategists who overlook the unsatisfied needs of the smaller countries merely because they are small and do not weigh heavily in the world balance of power.

Fortunately, in paragraph 2 of the Millennium Declaration, our heads of State or Government recognized

“that, in addition to our separate responsibilities to our individual societies, we have a collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level.”

For his part, Pope John Paul II has denounced the trend that is affecting contemporary society, saying,

“Today in America, as elsewhere in the world, we see emerging a model of society in which the powerful rule and the weakest are marginalized or even eliminated”.

We must reverse this trend towards selfishness with democratic and ethical regimes based on solidarity that will meet the needs of the great majority and ensure the exercise of civil and political rights, as well as of economic, social and cultural rights. That is why the current Government of Ecuador believes that mere economic growth will not suffice to ensure human development. On the contrary, we believe that policies for economic growth must be closely linked with policies for social development. Without development there will be no peace. Where poverty and misery prevail, there will be no real democracy. Where there is oppression and repression, there will be no respect for human rights. There can be no just and balanced international order until all the peoples of the world have access to the benefits of globalization.

My country hopes that the democratic system will emerge strengthened from the forthcoming Conference in Benin, for which we offer our firm support and cooperation.

Mr. Ouane (Mali) (*spoke in French*): Mali attaches particular importance to the subject under consideration. That is why, first and foremost, I should like to express the gratitude of my delegation to the Secretary-General for the quality of his report

contained in document A/55/489. The report provides an overview of the activities and ideas formulated within the United Nations system on this subject. My delegation is also very grateful to the delegation of Romania, which introduced the draft resolution in document A/55/L.32, entitled “Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies”.

Today, democracy is the most widespread form of government in the world. The wave of democratization that has been sweeping the world for a decade — a process that is still under way — as reflected in the regular convening of International Conferences on New or Restored Democracies, has made a major contribution to the success of democratic regimes. The clearly positive effects of a beneficial democratic experience provide everybody with the best tools to face up to the contemporary world and the challenges of the twenty-first century.

In this respect, may I refer to the words of President Konaré, who stated at the Warsaw conference,

“The development of democracy is the foundation of a world of peace, a world of solidarity and social justice. Democracy alone allows each of us to assume the burden, but also the honour, of being a human being at the service of human beings.”

Democracy is also inseparable from development. In fact, democracy remains fragile if a minimum level of well-being is not given to our populations. In this respect, the international community, must make its contribution to reducing social inequality so that democracy does not just become a simple electoral showcase.

Since 1992, my country, Mali, has been involved in an original democratic experience and has attempted to instil in all sectors of the population a culture of democracy and human rights. In the area of good governance, the Government of Mali has undertaken a major programme of fighting corruption and financial delinquency. Also, in order to ensure that each citizen is involved in the management of public affairs, the Government has undertaken a process of decentralizing power towards local bodies, through the creation of 701 municipalities. This reform was carried out in 1999 by electing politicians at the local level who are directly accountable to those who elected them.

At the international level, the Government of Mali has taken part in several initiatives in the area of the promotion and consolidation of democracy. In this respect, Mali, as initiator of the conference entitled "Towards a Community of Democracies", held in Warsaw last June, welcomes the Declaration that was adopted there, which recommends the strengthening of cooperation between democratic States so that they can share their best practices, protect themselves against threats to democratic processes and work towards the emergence of a forum of partnership for assistance to new democracies. We hope that the birth of the Community of Democracies in Warsaw will promote the flourishing of democratic principles throughout the world.

Mali also welcomes the Third Committee's adoption, on 9 November last, of a draft resolution on the promotion and consolidation of democracy. The draft resolution stresses the close link that exists between human rights and democracy and reaffirms the full responsibility of States to defend and promote human rights and to join their efforts to consolidate democracy, the development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Furthermore, it stresses that while all democracies have common points, there is no single universal democratic model.

In the same vein, in Bamako, Mali, from 1-3 November 2000, an international symposium was held on the subject of practices of democracy, rights and freedoms in francophone countries. At the end of the symposium, the Bamako Declaration was adopted, which is intended to be both a body of standards and a practical guide for respect for democracy in francophone countries.

The Bamako Declaration considers that francophonie and democracy are indissociably connected and provides for the application of sanctions when there are breakdowns in democracy or serious violations of human rights. Those sanctions consist of a country's automatic suspension of membership from the International Organization of la Francophonie when its democratically elected Government is overthrown, as well as restrictions on the issuing of visas for the de facto authorities of the countries concerned. Mali condemns all *coups d'état* because there is no such thing as a good *coup d'état*.

The holding in Cotonou next 4-6 December of the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored

Democracies — the first such Conference in Africa — is, for my delegation, a source of legitimate pride given the pioneering role that Benin has played in the rebirth of democracy in Africa. I should like to reiterate my Government's support to the delegation of Benin in making that Conference a resounding success.

Finally, my delegation has co-sponsored draft resolution A/55/L.32 because we share the political message that it contains, and we hope that it will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the Secretary-General for his report contained in document A/55/489. We have carefully analysed it and we believe it provides the framework for a substantive discussion of the issue.

In our opinion, democracy means real, everyday participation in the exercise of power and in the decision-making process at the political, economic, social and cultural levels. Democracy is the power of the people. It is the government of the people, by the people and for the people that Lincoln dreamed of.

As endorsed by the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in 1993, democracy is based on the freely expressed will of the people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural systems and their full participation in all aspects of life.

There would be no democracy without freedom, without popular participation, without social justice, without individual and collective well-being and without human solidarity. Sovereignty resides in the people, and without national independence there is no sovereignty; neither is there democracy if there is no development. Democracy cannot be confined to the exercise of civil and political rights to the detriment of economic and social rights.

A rigorous approach to the issue must recognize that the limitations, problems and challenges faced by democracy are present, one way or another, everywhere, at all latitudes in both hemispheres. The South should not be treated with the same attitude that existed in colonizing it.

This approach also means explicit recognition of the fact that no single model of democracy has ever existed, or ever can exist. A serious analysis must accept the premise of the diversity of forms and

models based on national, historical, economic, cultural and religious particularities.

The existence of common concepts in the diversity of democratic forms must not be confused with the attempt to impose representative democracy as a mandatory model for developing countries.

Let us speak directly and clearly: a multi-party system does not mean democracy; neither does democracy require the existence of a multi-party system. There are many examples of countries with many parties where there is neither democracy nor participation. I am proud to say that Cuba has a profoundly popular and participatory democracy, without political parties as intermediaries, where the people exercise power. We ask for understanding and respect for our experience, which results from our history, but we do not offer that experience as a model for anyone else.

The quest for and improvement of democracy should not be confused with the exportation of recipes that serve the hegemonic appetites of a small group of powerful and wealthy countries. International cooperation for the promotion and consolidation of democracy must not be manipulated for political purposes.

We are satisfied with the Secretary-General's recognition of the failure both of the importation of procedures and systems used in other countries and of Constitutions drafted using foreign models, as well as his acknowledgement of the common, regrettable misperception that democracy is a Western concept.

Also striking is the report's conclusion that the implementation of its recommendations

“necessitates more resources from both regular and extrabudgetary resources than the United Nations currently has available.” (A/55/489, para. 35)

The report of the Secretary-General does not mention even once the Charter of the United Nations or its purposes and principles. Neither does it mention the sovereignty of States or sovereign equality. It does not make reference to peoples' right to self-determination, nor does it proscribe foreign interference. This report establishes a new correlation between democratization, good governance, human rights, sustainable development, peace and security — concepts that are not clearly set out. This correlation seems to be aimed

at replacing the interrelation recognized by Member States in the Vienna consensus between democracy, development and human rights.

The democracy-development relationship is confined to the role of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and to the resources this institution today allocates to programmes aimed at strengthening and consolidating democracy. It seems to us to be of dubious merit that UNDP commits 50 per cent of its resources to programmes aimed at promoting political governance, supporting public sector reform, strengthening governing institutions, enhancing democratization and increasing political participation. In fact, it seems obvious that UNDP has increasingly directed its attention away from economic and social development programmes in order to focus on other tasks — something that constitutes a violation of its mandate. It is regrettable that the main role of UNDP has been distorted, despite all that remains to be done and all the resources needed to ensure the economic and social progress of the countries of the South.

Donor countries' growing imposition of conditions on development assistance to the countries of the South is unacceptable. That conditioning is to the detriment of peoples' ability to determine their own needs and priorities. The role of UNDP in this democratization process presupposes that it is only the countries of the South that need assistance in this area and that only they are capable of making progress towards real democracy. We do not know what principles and values could be taken as the basis for such an erroneous assumption. Cuba recognizes the important role the United Nations system can play to support the efforts made by all countries to strengthen and consolidate democracy. However, Cuba reiterates that this can only be done on the basis of unconditional respect for the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

We find extremely worrisome the view expressed in the report of the Secretary-General that electoral assistance should not end with elections and that such assistance should be extended to facilitate the establishment of a country's political, economic and social system. Cuba believes that neither the Organization nor any of its bodies are entitled to judge the electoral processes or political systems of its Member States, as only States themselves are capable of making decisions about those processes and determining what assistance they need. The United

Nations should limit itself strictly to providing the assistance requested by a State. It is in no way appropriate for the Secretariat or any private organization or institution dealing with these issues outside the United Nations to assume functions that are inherently a part of the sovereignty of Member States. We oppose the attempt of some Powers to manipulate United Nations institutions in a meddling way, while they seek to maintain immunity from legitimate debate of their own problems.

Another element of the report that we believe can also be called into question has to do with the relationship between democracy, peace and security; including peacekeeping operations or, as they have been recently been called, peace operations. The assertion that the lack of democracy is one of the main causes of many of today's conflicts — and therefore that the involvement of the United Nations in the form of so-called peace operations is essential — should, at the very least, lead Member States to give this matter some deep thought. We reiterate our opposition to any kind of intervention in developing countries under the pretext of the so-called right to democracy or under any other pretext aimed at legitimizing “humanitarian intervention”.

We believe the report must be subject to broad consideration in the context of the General Assembly, instead of being relegated to other forums in which there will not be sufficient time to examine it with the necessary attention or in which not all States will be present, and which are not the appropriate venues to debate a report of the General Assembly.

We agree with the Secretary-General's assertion that

“Democratization gives people a stake in society ... for unless people feel that they have a true stake in society, lasting peace will not be possible and sustainable development will not be achieved.” (A/55/489, para. 19)

We also agree with his contention that

“Democratic elections are an important component of democracy, but they do not create democracy.” (*ibid*, para. 21)

Likewise, we support the view expressed in the report that

“[the] connection between elector and elected, and the accountability of those elected... provides an important training ground for promoting democracy at the national level.” (*ibid*, para. 23)

The Secretary-General has thus initiated a debate on the essential concepts and attributes of democracy. Not only can the Western or representative model of democracy not be exported to developing countries, but that model is even being seriously called into question by the citizens of industrialized countries themselves. Over half of those people believe that they themselves do not really have a role in decision-making processes; that they are subject to manipulation by electoral campaigns and the media; that their political model is elitist and exclusionary; and that politicians lack prestige and do not meet their election promises.

Oddly enough, the democratic model used by the main exporter of democracy and the most intransigent judge of world democracy has been undergoing a special crisis in recent days. That crisis is not a passing one; rather, it is a structural crisis. It is also an excellent example of the fact that such a model has long since become distorted and stopped working. That model clearly does not have the attributes described in the report of the Secretary-General. The South should never copy a system where politicians are legally corrupted and bribery is called “soft money” or “contributions from interest groups”.

Democracy cannot exist in a society where half of the citizens do not register to vote, or one in which one third of those registered do not cast their votes. Democracy cannot exist in a society where a president can be elected by 26 per cent of the voters, or even where the candidate receiving fewer popular votes can be the winner. A model in which the cost of an election campaign exceeds \$3 billion can neither be sustainable nor rational. An election in which 95 per cent of politicians elected are incumbents, where there is no control by the people, and where those elected are not accountable to the voters and cannot be recalled, does not reflect a democratic system. Nor can a two-party system be democratic when it is made up of two almost identical parties, in which it is the party of those who do not vote that is always in the majority.

Let them investigate voting irregularities, charges of fraud and other abuses against African-American and Haitian-American citizens. Let them learn humility

and let them no longer recommend to us, the countries of the South, international monitoring of our elections or issue any further certifications of election legitimacy. Let them not ask us for any more proof of the majority's support for those we elect, and let them instead keep their own homes in order.

We do not believe the demagoguery expressed by industrialized countries with regard to freedoms and political rights while they do nothing to eradicate poverty and ensure development in the South; to prevent millions of people from dying of hunger and curable diseases; to educate our illiterate people; to shelter the helpless; to ensure an honourable old age for our elderly; to ensure the advancement of women in the South; or to offer our children a future to live for.

If left undistorted, the movement of the so-called new and restored democracies could be an opportunity for sharing and support of efforts made by many peoples to consolidate their democratic systems, provided that unrestricted respect for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations is maintained. However, this process is not without risk. The challenge lies in allocating United Nations resources and actions to the legitimate interests of the overwhelming majority of Member States; in putting those resources and actions at the disposal of the peoples who are calling for real and effective action from the United Nations to achieve peace and development so that they can be benefit with the multiple democratic systems of the community of nations. This could help democratize international relations and change the exclusionary, inequitable and unsustainable international order that is the main obstacle to the exercise of true democracy in developing countries.

Let me conclude by thanking the Government of Benin for its work to organize and prepare for the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, which is to take place in Cotonou from 4 to 6 December 2000. We assure the Assembly of my delegation's modest contribution to that event, at which we shall indeed be represented.

Mr. Mabilangan (Philippines): I would like to begin by expressing my delegation's gratitude to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive and lucid report on support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies (A/55/489), and for his later

report (A/55/520) containing the comments and observations of several countries on lessons learned from their respective experiences in the practice and pursuit of democratic ideals.

The Philippine delegation is gratified that the momentum towards greater democracy, which started at the first conference on this theme, held at Manila in 1988, has continued to generate global synergy for initiatives to support the process of democratization all over the world. From the 13 countries that participated in the Manila conference, the attendance had grown to 80 at our third and most recent meeting, held at Bucharest in 1997. In addition, in June this year the Government of Poland hosted in Warsaw a conference on the theme, "Towards a community of democracies", which was attended by 106 countries with the participation of some 70 foreign ministers. We look forward to the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, to be held at Cotonou next month, in which all Members of the United Nations have been invited to participate and whose focus will be on the promotion and consolidation of democracy in the African continent.

We welcome the fact that the importance of promoting and strengthening democracy has been increasingly recognized within the United Nations. We commend the Third Committee for the draft resolution it adopted a few weeks ago on promoting and consolidating democracy; it received the support of 145 delegations. Democracy and the rule of law are clearly now the normative goal of the international community.

The United Nations should continue its efforts to consolidate representative democracy and the rule of law as a system of government for all. Democratic governance fosters political pluralism and effective participation by citizens in the process of nation-building. Democracy also enhances good governance and the ethical discharge of public duties by those holding the reins of power. We also subscribe to the view that democracy acts as a catalytic force for sustainable development by liberating the energies and talents of peoples. Democracy not only promotes political empowerment but also facilitates economic development.

While the concept and practice of democracy find divergent expression based on the unique historical experiences of peoples, they possess the common thread of participation of citizens in the process of

governance. As a Government that derives its legitimacy from the will of its people, the Philippines Government ensures that its citizens participate in the political life of the nation. That policy emanates from the belief that people should become stakeholders in the political, economic and social priorities of Governments to achieve lasting peace and sustainable development.

No country or group of countries can claim to have perfected the pursuit of democracy. Even established democracies have their weaknesses. But that should not be a deterrent to our resolve to promote and consolidate democracy in the world. We urge the United Nations to make this one of its highest priorities in the new millennium.

When our leaders held their historic Millennium Summit a few months ago, they gave us the unequivocal mandate to pursue democracy and the rule of law as one of the important goals of the United Nations. They also reiterated that freedom from fear and want continued to be one of this Organization's fundamental values. They asserted that democratic and participatory governance based on the will of the people would best assure the preservation of that freedom. The collective wisdom of our leaders should guide us in our efforts to promote and consolidate democracy in the world today.

We urge all Members of the United Nations to support the Benin Conference. The four-point agenda of the conference, as outlined on 15 September by the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Benin, would help address the challenges in the work for democracy, especially in the African continent. We commend the Government of Benin for taking on the challenge of leading this initiative in Africa. Benin has proven to be a stalwart of democratic ideals, and we wish the Government and people of Benin success in this endeavour.

Mr. Preware (Nigeria): Let me start by expressing the appreciation of my delegation to the Secretary-General for his report on support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies (A/55/489).

The Nigerian delegation noted with satisfaction the General Assembly's adoption at its fifty-third session of resolution 53/31 of 23 November 1998 encouraging Member States to promote

democratization and to make additional efforts to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies. In that context, Nigeria fully supports the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, scheduled to take place in Cotonou, Benin, from 4 to 6 December 2000. The timing is significant not only because of the importance we attach to the democratization process in Africa but also because this is the first time that this international conference will be held in Africa. That historic Conference will thus offer not only a global platform for the strengthening of democratic transformation, but also an opportunity to draw attention to emergent democracies, prospects and challenges in Africa.

My delegation is convinced that the success of the Conference will be assured by the very effective preparations already engaged in at various levels. We welcome the meetings that have taken place within the preparatory process, including those that took place in Cotonou, Helsinki and Warsaw between February and June this year. We want to acknowledge the efforts of the Government of Benin as the focal point in the preparatory process. The theme of the Benin meeting, "Democracy, peace, security and development", is particularly relevant to the development of good democratic governance, progress, stability and security in a continent that has long been plagued with problems of governance and security.

For us in Nigeria, the experience of the immediate past and the realities of today demonstrate quite clearly that there is no alternative to democracy if the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are to be respected. The Nigerian delegation shares the views expressed by the Secretary-General on the links between democratization, political rights, economic freedoms and development in his report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. We fully subscribe to the idea, expressed in the Vienna Declaration, that democracy, development and respect for human rights are interdependent and mutually reinforcing; their promotion and sustenance translate into an effective conflict prevention strategy.

The Millennium Declaration adopted by the heads of States or Government at their recent Summit here in New York remains a beacon of hope for the whole world, especially the global commitment to the implementation of the principles and practices of

democracy in an inclusive manner that allows fuller participation by all citizens.

A new democratic Government was installed in Nigeria in May 1999. I am delighted to report a dramatic change in the socio-political environment of the country: an end to political detentions, freedom of speech, active trade unionism, independence of the judiciary and the process of law characterize the new national scene. Where there have been abuses in the past, the Government has not shied away from exposing such abuses and in seeking reconciliation between the citizenry and the agencies of governance. Right now, even as I speak, a special panel, called the Justice Oputa Panel, is holding public hearings on past human rights and related abuses. Disclosures already made at these hearings demonstrate both the extent of the abuses in the past and the need to ensure that such abuses are not allowed to recur in the new democratic environment. Hopefully, the ongoing exercise will promote the spirit of reconciliation. A people reconciled is better placed to collectively combat the problems of poverty, insecurity and underdevelopment.

Poverty breeds frustration and multidimensional social problems. Democracy must seek to provide an environment where people are not only able to feed and clothe themselves but also able to plan for development. Democracy must be able to provide that dividend of inclusiveness, poverty alleviation, security and improvement in people's lives. For democracy to endure, it must lead to marked improvement in the quality of life of the people. It is in this context that the Government of Nigeria has put in place various measures that would progressively alleviate and eventually eliminate poverty.

In conclusion, my delegation recognizes the enormous challenges facing the promotion and, more importantly, the consolidation of democracy. A huge debt overhang constitutes serious constraints to poverty alleviation and development. Continuing poverty and lack of development undermine the very growth of democracy. There is therefore a compelling need for international efforts to assist developing countries to rid themselves of their debt burdens and to position themselves for consolidating their fledgling democracies.

Nigeria recognizes the vast dividends that installed democracy and security promise, and Nigeria seeks to realize that promise. We reaffirm our

commitment to the cause of democracy, transparency and accountability in governance. The Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies is a welcome forum that must translate international goodwill and commitment into effective entrenchment of democracy, peace, security and development.

Mr. Regmi (Nepal): I am pleased to share my delegation's views on this agenda item, which is of the utmost importance in contemporary society. As a recently restored democracy, Nepal attaches great importance to this subject.

There is no doubt that democracy has proved itself as the best system among all forms of governance. The growing democratization of countries around the world speaks for the strength and popularity of a pluralistic system of governance. Democracy is about the people's rule and about the rule of law. In a democratic society, citizens are presumed to have equal rights, opportunities and voice in the governance of the public domain. Because of these characteristics, people's faith in democracy has increased and deepened.

However, it is disheartening to note that, despite people's deep faith in democracy, and because of poverty, illiteracy and other numerous reasons, a good proportion of the emerging democracies have failed to make any meaningful progress in the area of socio-economic development. Even in those countries where free and fair elections have been held, democratization is only an electoral issue. Electoral democracy is yet to be transformed into opportunities for people to enjoy unfettered civil rights, into the empowerment of the people and into improvements in their standard of living. In other words, in many parts of the democratic world, democracy is yet to be consolidated, yet to be institutionalized and yet to be strengthened. New or restored democracies still face threats from the extreme right and left.

My delegation is highly appreciative of the support of the United Nations, through its various agencies, for the promotion and consolidation of new or restored democracies. We are sure that United Nations efforts in these areas, together with the promotion of good governance and the observance of human rights, will produce fruitful results. We also commend the policy of the United Nations Development Programme to allocate about half of its

resources to support public sector reforms; to decentralization and local governance; to strengthen governing institutions; to develop leadership; and to enhance democratization and the political empowerment of the poor. United Nations assistance in the electoral process of developing countries is also very encouraging.

My delegation is fully aware that the freely expressed will of the people, the rule of law and the observance of human rights in good faith are foundations of democracy. We consider that human rights, democracy and development should go together. Therefore, my delegation fully endorses the resolution entitled "Promoting and consolidating democracy", recently adopted by the Commission on Human Rights, which highlights the important link between democracy and human rights.

Nepal is highly encouraged by the convening of the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, which will take place in Benin next month. We extend our deep appreciation to the Government of Benin for hosting the Conference. We also commend donor countries, United Nations agencies and international organizations for their contribution to the preparatory process and to the organization of the Conference. We believe that the Conference will provide an opportunity to share experiences, learn from best practices and foster solidarity among new or restored democracies to pursue their common objectives.

At this juncture, I should like to dwell on Nepal's experience with democracy, freedom and human rights. Nepal is a multi-ethnic, multilingual and democratic nation. The system of multiparty democracy and the provision of basic human rights to every citizen are immutable parts of our Constitution. As such, Nepal has shown a great deal of concern for the inviolability of human rights. In order to lend dignity to humanity, we have adopted a policy of poverty alleviation, in the strong belief that the alleviation of poverty will empower people and promote human rights and democracy.

In order to ensure the effective participation of the people in our task of nation-building through the promotion of human rights and democratization, we have recently enacted the Self-Government Act.

I would therefore like to urge all developed countries to adopt measures to increase the flow of

resources to the newly and restored democracies, particularly the least developed countries, by enhancing official development assistance, so that our democracy could be enhanced, consolidated and institutionalized.

Before concluding, I should like to express my appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive reports on this agenda item.

Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia): It is indeed a pleasure for me to address the General Assembly on the item entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies".

Since its independence, Indonesia has continuously contributed to the construction of a more democratic relationship among nations. We have worked within the United Nations and other forums to build a more equitable international order in which both rich and poor nations have a voice in global governance, and we have sought to remove obstacles — principally that of poverty — to the free expression of will.

I am pleased to add that as a result of the evolution of events, we in Indonesia are now ourselves enjoying a more democratic and egalitarian governance. After several decades during which we exerted every effort to promote international democracy, we are entering a new era as a more democratic nation — a new Indonesia.

We have regained the democratic rights that were foreseen by the founding fathers of our nation and can more freely give expression to our opinions and differences through the press and in public. The process of transition to democracy in Indonesia has been marked by a number of fundamental changes in our social and economic lives. We have seen the emergence of approximately 150 political parties, and we have held peaceful national elections. The role of the military in political life has been significantly diminished, and the rule of law is being strengthened.

Yet, while we are free to express political opinions, and although political debate has never been more vibrant, we nevertheless remain shackled by poverty, illiteracy and uncertainty. The economic crisis that ushered in this new democracy is also continuing to inflict untold hardships on many people in our country. Millions of Indonesians remain at the margins

of society and have become disenfranchised by their precarious situation. Indeed, like all nascent democracies, Indonesia is facing considerable challenges in meeting the needs of its people and in creating the social stability that is so essential for a sound and strengthened government.

While democracy has perhaps been proven to be the incubator of economic opportunity and development, transition periods tend to increase uncertainties and exacerbate inequalities within society. It is therefore essential for the international community to remain sensitive to the fragility that exists in new democracies and in those that are re-emerging. In particular, international financial institutions should give serious consideration to the impact that structural adjustment has on the people, and to how various economic programmes and external influences affect the heightened expectations that are present in nascent democracies.

For its part, the Government of Indonesia is vigorously working to restore the people's confidence in the Government. Paramount in this effort is the quest to imbue Government apparatus with a culture of human rights. To that end, the reform Government has lifted the previously applied ban on political parties; it has released political prisoners jailed under the former Government; and it has encouraged freedom of expression and freedom of the press. There has also been an ongoing review of existing legislation and the adoption of several international human rights instruments, with additional ones under review. We are doing everything in our capacity to strengthen our democratic structures, and we would benefit from increased international cooperation and support.

The Community of Democracies ministerial meeting, convened in Warsaw, Poland, from 25 to 27 June of this year, represented an important event in strengthening democratic systems through dialogue and through a sharing of best practices and lessons learned. Indonesia views the Warsaw Declaration, adopted at that conference, as a positive document encompassing core democratic principles and practices. We welcome in particular the emphasis that it gave to the promotion and protection of all human rights, and we would underline in that regard the right to development. Also encouraging is the Warsaw Declaration's affirmation of a determination to work together to promote and strengthen democracy, giving recognition to the

different stages of political development for each country and the need to respect sovereignty.

Likewise, Indonesia has been an active participant in the International Conferences on New or Restored Democracies on democracy and development. We look forward to the deliberations on these issues, to take place soon at the fourth such Conference, to be held in Benin. Let me take this opportunity to welcome all of the efforts being made by the Government of Benin in preparation for this event and for our discussions on the four indicative subjects that are outlined in document A/55/489.

As the community of nations works in concert to support the principles of democracy and good governance, I believe that it is essential to recognize that there is no one universal model of democracy. Each nation must follow its own course, as determined by its history, its traditions and its cultural imperatives.

In concluding, my delegation would underline the need for the international community to clarify the role of the United Nations in providing assistance and in strengthening its contribution at all levels. That initiative involves, among other things, the activities and mandates of United Nations peace operations and those of development agencies.

Thoughtful consideration needs to be given to this effort, based on the reality that each nation must adapt its form of democracy to its specific needs and conform it to the cultural heritage and traditions of its people.

We look forward to a healthy and insightful debate on these issues at the forthcoming Benin Conference.

Mr. Kolby (Norway): Since the early 1990s, a wave of democratization has swept through the world. There are more democratically elected Governments today than ever before in history. In recent years, new democracies have emerged and some democracies have been restored. Although democracy as an idea and a concept has taken centre stage in the international political debate, its practical application still lags behind. But, of course, the process of developing a real democratic society is a never-ending one.

The strengthening of democratic processes and institutions is a core commitment in Norway's international involvement, bilaterally as well as multilaterally. Norway is therefore pleased to see that

the international community is assigning increased priority and giving its support to national and international efforts to strengthen and promote democracy. This has manifested itself in, among other things, the initiatives taken by the countries that participated in the United Nations-sponsored International Conferences of New or Restored Democracies held in Manila in 1988, in Managua in 1994 and in Bucharest in 1997.

This year's resolution, entitled "Promoting and consolidating democracy", reflects the international community's awareness of the importance of these issues. The draft resolution adopted by the Third Committee was sponsored by more than 70 countries. The Norwegian Government would, in particular, like to commend the main sponsors, Romania and Benin, for their successful efforts to mobilize broad support for this important draft resolution.

Norway strongly supports the group of new and restored democracies that have been instrumental in putting democracy-building on the international political agenda. We believe that the upcoming Fourth Conference of New or Restored Democracies, scheduled to be held in December in Cotonou, Benin, will make important contributions to the consolidation of democracy, particularly in Africa.

Norwegian development cooperation policy has been and continues to be focused on democracy-building in the context of sustainable social and economic development. We have offered financial and technical advice on elections in a number of developing countries. We have facilitated capacity-building and support functions for the legislative and judicial branches of Governments. Support has also been given to the independent media, non-governmental and women's organizations and trade unions with a view to strengthening civil society. We realize that we cannot build democracy exclusively through such assistance, but we can help countries to do so themselves.

In our common efforts to promote democracy, we must stand firmly by our principles, but we should also maintain a certain humility. We should not depart from the principle that democracy involves diversity and choices, equality and respect for the individual. At the same time, we must bear in mind that there are different ways of organizing democracies. Unless allowances are made for local factors, history and

culture, it will be difficult for democracy to take root. Democracy cannot be imposed from without; it must be the fruit of a process and nurtured from within. In order to put into perspective what many emerging democracies are going through, we should look back at our own history, not in order to export our own solutions, but to share our own relevant experience. We must accept that developing democracy takes time.

There is no universal model for democracy. Democracy is a concept with a variety of meanings and definitions. No single political idea or system can claim exclusive ownership of the democratic idea or democratic politics. If the world is to develop into a family of democratic States, the best we can hope for is not the imposition of the same democratic model on every country, but a wide variety of applications of certain basic democratic principles.

From our point of view, the following shortlist of principles is associated with the idea of democracy. Democracy requires that authority rests with the people and that the Government be accountable to the people. The purpose of a democratic Government as an instrument of the authority of the people is to secure equality and freedom. Democracy requires the widest possible participation. Democracy rests on a system of institutions, laws and regulations that ensure that the will of the people is expressed at the level of government decisions. Democracy rests on a system of checks and balances. Democracy is a system of deliberation to arrive at effective decisions based on the diverse and conflicting views and interests of the people. Democracy is a system for the selection and renewal of national leadership that is accountable to the people. Any political regime that wants to be recognized as democratic will, in our opinion, have to respect all of these fundamental principles.

The rule of law; transparency and accountability in the management of public affairs; respect for human rights; and the full participation of all citizens in the decisions of Government — these are all essential conditions for democracy and for the kind of growth and prosperity that make development possible. The genuine political will to achieve democratic development must come from within the country itself and from its people. Only thus will cooperation with the aim of strengthening democratic institutions have meaning and only thus will it be able to succeed.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 33/18 of 10 November 1978 and decision 53/453 of 18 December 1998, I call on the observer for the International Organization of la Francophonie.

Mr. Bouabid (International Organization of la Francophonie) (*spoke in French*): The question of support for the promotion and consolidation of new or restored democracies is of particular interest to the International Organization of la Francophonie. This is, first, because one of the priority objectives of the organization is to assist in the establishment and development of democracy, as stipulated in its charter, and because Francophonie attaches particular importance in its objectives to cooperation with other international organizations, in particular with the United Nations system, with which we are linked by several cooperation agreements.

In our activities over the past 10 years with respect to the democratization process, the International Organization of la Francophonie has consistently promoted cooperation with the United Nations, particularly in the promotion of human rights, in observing and assisting elections and, more generally, in fostering a common understanding of the dynamics of democratization.

This explains the support given by the International Organization of la Francophonie for the holding of the Third International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, held in Bucharest in September 1997, for the holding of the regional conference in February 2000 in Cotonou — which was part of the preparatory process for the Fourth Conference — as well as for the holding of this Fourth Conference, to be held next month in Cotonou.

Given the importance of the subject dealt with at the regional conference — an assessment of national conferences and other processes of democratic transition in Africa — the International Organization of la Francophonie, through its intergovernmental agency, and in partnership with the authorities of Benin, participated in the organization of this conference, which also marked the tenth anniversary of the Conference of the Active Forces of the Nation in Benin. The report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations submitted to this session of the General Assembly makes a reference to that important Conference.

The International Organization of la Francophonie made important expert knowledge available for the scientific preparation of and introductory studies to the debates held during the conference last February. It contributed to identifying and ensuring the presence of individuals who have played an important role in the process of transition. It also made a contribution by ensuring that there was a significant representation of French-speaking African delegations. This will be the case as well at the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies.

The International Organization also provided logistical support for the conference in February, as well as computer-related materials, which will also be used for the Fourth Conference. Finally, it is publishing the proceedings of the conference in February, which will be widely distributed in Cotonou in December. Financial and logistical aid is also being given to the Fourth Conference itself. The whole of the investments made by the International Organization amounts to some 2.5 million French francs.

In addition, in order to deepen their dialogue and their cooperation in the area of democracy and respect for freedoms, the heads of State or Government of French-speaking countries, meeting in Moncton in September 1999 at the Eighth Francophone Summit, decided to hold a symposium on the assessment of practices of democracy, rights and freedoms in French-speaking countries, to which the representative of Mali referred a few moments ago. They also decided that this symposium, which would be prepared jointly with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, should allow the International Organization to highlight at the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies its major achievements. This symposium just took place in Bamako, from 1 to 3 November 2000, under the leadership of Mr. Alpha Oumar Konaré, President of the Republic of Mali, with over 400 participants, including the representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ibrahim Fall, and the representatives of several bodies of the United Nations system.

The preparation of the symposium involved a great deal of consciousness-raising and mobilization of all key players and figures of the democratic process in French-speaking countries, involving not only States and Governments but also political parties, members of

Parliaments, trade unions, the media, non-governmental organizations and all components of civil society, as well as international organizations.

Allow me to mention some of the results of the preparatory work, which, in echoing directly the questions brought up in the report of the Secretary-General presented to this Assembly, add to today's debate.

With regard to the assessment that emerged from the preparatory work, I think several points should be stressed. Although this assessment related to French-speaking countries, it also has global application on many points. The assessment of more than 10 years of democratization has certainly given us a very varied picture.

With regard to institutions of democracy and of the rule of law, the last 10 years have been marked by constitutional burgeoning, where we have seen pluralist democracy and the rule of law flourish in French-speaking countries. But the institutions that have been established — classical institutions, parliamentary assemblies, judicial systems or new institutions, such as constitutional courts, ombudsmen, national independent electoral commissions and others — have basic problems with regard to their actual independence, as well as to their financial and material autonomy. The challenge is therefore to make these institutions effective and to ensure that they play their role in democratic life. There is still much to be done with regard to improving the conditions of the functioning and the independence of Parliaments and judicial systems, as well as of the supreme authorities for monitoring, mediation and regulation. These improvements will require an increase in human and material resources.

With regard to elections, significant progress has been made over the past decade concerning the holding of elections that are free, transparent and in line with the essential standards of democracy and the rule of law. But at the same time, electoral processes — which are sometimes carried out in a context marked by the newness of the institutions responsible for carrying them out, the insufficient preparation of many of those involved, difficult socio-economic conditions, mentalities that are often resistant to change or electoral assistance and international cooperation that have been slow to adapt — have very often been at the

basis of tensions and even of upsetting consensus or civil harmony.

The question of electoral lists is crucial and is linked to the imperative need to establish a solid civil State. It is the whole of the electoral process, from the preparation of the election to the voting, that must receive the attention of the players in political life and in the area of cooperation. In the electoral processes that have enabled us to bring about the changing of Governments, we must stress the very important role of civil society, the press and new technologies.

The assessment concerning the responsibility of the structures in charge of elections is also a rather varied picture. The problems relate to the appropriateness of the tasks that these institutions have and the resources allocated to them. The question of consistency is thus fundamental; hence the need for targeted measures, particularly in order to strengthen the capacity of States to manage electoral operations.

Another problem relates to the criteria that allow us to declare that elections have been free, just and transparent. In that regard, the coordination meeting with international organizations that was held on 28 April 2000 in Paris enabled us to recognize the need for working together in order to identify operational parameters.

With regard to political life, the role of constitutions, in their institutional dimension and as a charter of freedoms, arises. We need to ask whether constitutions in themselves are a source of political crises. The importance of the institutional framework laid down by a constitution has to be put in perspective; in effect, apart from the legal architecture provided by the constitution, it is very often a matter of the quality of the democratic culture inspiring the political game.

The question of what attitude to adopt towards the question of the influence of ethnic diversity in the political life of States also remains crucial. All societies have fragmentations — social, religious and ethnic. Should these identities, consequently, become politicized? Should they leave their social context to move into the political arena and be subject to the law of the republic? Would we not then be risking the ethnicization of political life, which would give rise to legitimate fears and, in a number of countries, become the subject of specific measures to prevent this?

Would it be possible to avoid considering that ethnic divisions amount to basic political differences by seeing ethnicity as an expression of diversity and not of antagonism? Is violence not always associated with a will for hegemonistic domination, with problems arising where there is a lack of justice, a lack of respect for human rights and inequalities in development? And the overly frequent pursuit of power for the sake of rewards — politics being seen as a way of getting rich for politicians and their clans; does this not contribute to intensifying the stakes of political life, very often with the ethnic factor being exploited for political ends? These are the essential questions that, at the dawn of the new century, are not asked only in the new or restored democracies.

It has been noted that democratic culture rests not only on institutions and standards but on attitudes and practices inspired by a specific idea of politics as providing a space for the confrontation of ideas and for conciliation and legitimate arbitration between interests. The responsibility of political players must be stressed. The quality of democratic politics and, hence, the effectiveness of democracy and the rule of law, can be measured by the functioning of transparent mechanisms for mediating and resolving conflicts.

The ideas that were freely expressed at the Bamako symposium led to a draft declaration and programme of action which was submitted to the participants of the Bamako meeting. Supplemented with the results of the work of the round tables that took place within the framework of the symposium, those drafts were approved by the heads of Government delegations, which met in a working meeting, and the Bamako Declaration was solemnly adopted at a plenary meeting on 3 November 2000.

This document, which is the result of 10 years of commitment to the process of democratization on the part of the International Organization of la Francophonie, is of great importance to the French-speaking community. Indeed, the adoption of the Bamako Declaration provided the organization with a standard-setting text on democracy, bringing together in the service of democracy, for the first time, States, Governments, parliamentarians, mayors, experts, university teachers, representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society and the media.

The International Organization of la Francophonie has not only declared that the organization and democracy are inseparably linked, but, furthermore, expressed clearly and for the first time its rejection of the seizure of power by force, giving itself the means to react vigorously to any interruption of the democratic process or assault on human rights in French-speaking regions. Specific procedures have been adopted to deal with crises, the breakdown of democracy and serious or mass violations of human rights. Henceforth, in the event of a military *coup d'etat* against a democratically-elected regime, that country's membership in the organization will be suspended.

The organization intends to diversify and intensify its cooperation activities in support of democracy, increasingly mobilizing its efforts so as to assist in the fulfilment of strategic commitments undertaken by its member States and Governments in the interests of renewed partnership and active solidarity.

Finally, the organization is truly making progress — as the heads of State or Government, meeting in Moncton, hoped that it would — towards a meaningful stage in its dialogue on the strengthening of democracy and respect for freedom in French-speaking countries, affirming, in this context, its full political dimension.

With regard to this important development, three points should be stressed in the context of the coming Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies. First, throughout the Bamako process, and in the Declaration itself, it was recalled that, for the International Organization of la Francophonie, there is no single way of organizing democracy and that, while respecting universal principles, forms of democratic expression must be seen within the context of the specific historical, cultural and social realities of every people. Furthermore, we must stress that the representatives of the new or restored democracies themselves appealed strongly for the organization to condemn, in no uncertain terms, the taking of power by force and for it to take firm steps with regard to *coups d'etat* against democratically elected regimes.

Secondly, the Bamako Declaration stresses that democratic principles, in all their political, economic, social, cultural and legal dimensions, must also be the hallmark of international relations. The International

Organization of la Francophonie is firmly committed to the democratization of international relations, and it intends to step up its cooperation with other international and regional organizations, develop dialogue with a view to democratizing international relations and, in this framework, support initiatives to promote democracy.

Finally, the Bamako Declaration stresses the scale of the challenge represented by the participation in democratic life of all citizens, both men and women, including the poorest and the most disadvantaged. This implies that civil society must be mobilized to promote a culture of democracy, that partnerships be developed between the public and private sectors and that mechanisms be strengthened for dialogue with NGOs working in the area of democracy and human rights.

Those are some of the thoughts that I wanted to share with the Assembly as part of our debate today.

Our organization will be represented at the Cotonou Conference, in accordance with the wishes of our heads of State or Government. The delegation will be headed by our Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali. The organization will share its experience and also offer its full cooperation to the United Nations in support of efforts aimed at promoting and consolidating democracy and respect for human rights.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate for this meeting.

At the request of the sponsors of draft resolution A/55/L.32, action on the draft resolution will be postponed until Monday, 27 November 2000, when it will be taken up as the first item.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.