

# DEMOCRACY IN DEVELOPMENT

*Global consultations on the  
EU's role in democracy building*







# Democracy in Development:

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*A report of the International Institute for Democracy and  
Electoral Assistance (International IDEA)*

Democracy in Development: Global consultations on the EU's role in democracy building

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International IDEA  
SE -103 34 Stockholm  
Sweden

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## Preface

This report presents the first ever peer review of the European Union's external policies and practices on support for democracy and democracy building around the world. With the support of Sweden holding the incoming EU presidency, International IDEA has engaged counterparts and partners of the EU in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Arab world, South Asia and Southeast Asia<sup>1</sup> in a series of multi-regional consultations to get their feedback on the impact of these policies on democracy and democracy building in their respective regions.

We organized this process of multi-regional consultations in response to some monumental failures in the name of international democracy promotion in recent years – such as efforts to impose democratic solutions from the outside and a refusal to accept democratic outcomes from within. Today it seems to be widely recognized that democracy cannot be brought about in a top-down and outside-in way. This recognition urgently needs to be translated into true dialogue between peers in a way which is active but not aggressive, critical but not condescending, honest but not humiliating.

The need for new approaches to democracy building is further underscored by continuing global political and economic power shifts. The message from partners is that the EU is well placed to take a leadership role in shaping new approaches. The EU is seen by counterparts in other regions as arguably the biggest democratic success story in history. It is seen as an attractive and reliable cooperation partner, marked by long-term commitments and a transparent agenda. The EU's own internal achievements are frequently held up as a source of inspiration: peace, democracy, economic development, social cohesion and regional integration.

However, partners also lament the inability of the EU to step up to that leadership role, and its inability to translate its own experiences of integration into a more integrated approach to supporting sustainable democracy across the world. Foreign and security policy, development cooperation, enlargement policy, agricultural, trade and migration policies all impact on the opportunity for and sustainability of democracy. While partners experience the breadth of such impact, they do not experience the EU acting in an integrated way.

On this basis the recommendations emerging from the multi-regional consultations urge the EU to build on its strengths to improve its policies, practices and partnerships in four ways:

1. The EU needs to articulate its own experiences of democracy building, in order to respond to the great interest in the EU story and to inspire political dialogue and shared learning across regions.
2. The EU needs to reflect its internal achievements in its external action. The broad understanding of democracy as integrating political, social and economic rights which has been so successful in Europe itself, should be reflected in the EU's external action as well. Such an effort will require more interconnectedness between policy areas within the EU.

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<sup>1</sup> Roundtable conferences were organized in collaboration with the African Union (AU), the Organization of American States (OAS) and the League of Arab States (LAS). In Southeast Asia and South Asia the roundtables were organized in collaboration with leading think-tank partners of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) respectively: the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and the South Asia Centre for Policy Studies (SACEPS). Three global meetings encompassing all regions including EU institutions were also held in the process. In addition, background papers and articles were commissioned and individual interviews conducted to support the consultations.

3. The EU needs to stand by its basic principles, reaffirming its long-term commitment to democracy even in situations where short-term interests might lead to difficult compromises.
4. The EU must turn its rhetoric of partnership into a reality perceived by partners if progress on democracy building is to be achieved.

### ***Share Europe's own story***

European discourse about itself is often gloomy. Yet the good news is that the EU is clearly perceived to be more of a success story in other regions than at home. Seen from the rest of the world, EU Member States have grown peace, democracy and prosperity out of the ashes of brutality and bloodshed. They have nurtured an unrivalled combination of individual freedom, economic dynamism and social protection and cohesion.

As many countries across the world struggle to find the right balance between the citizen and the state, there is considerable interest in how Europe has achieved just this: and which political and economic processes were put in place to make it work so well? The EU's partners are actually rather puzzled that the EU does not make more of its success. There is a common demand by partners for information-sharing at peer level as a basis for political dialogue and assistance programmes. This is why they want to see the EU articulate its own experience into a more coherent policy in support of democracy building world wide.

### ***Apply abroad what you apply at home***

When other regions look to European democracies, they see more than merely electoral democracy. They see human rights understood and applied as an interdependent whole: civil and political rights as well as social, economic and cultural rights. They see democracies that by and large deliver on the needs and expectations of their citizens.

This very ability of democracy to deliver social and economic development is at the top of the agendas of the EU's partners in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean and the Arab World. Lack of social cohesion is fuelling human insecurity and political instability. A state unable to stimulate economic and social development often results in discontent about how democracy works. In turn, this leads to dissatisfaction with international democracy assistance which is seen to advocate free and fair elections but not always freedom in everyday life.

Herein is the giant paradox which the EU needs to address: when other regions experience EU external action, they see a much narrower, procedural, election-focused approach than what successfully characterizes democracies in Europe. If the EU is to capitalize on its own experience and attractiveness, it needs to seek synergies between democracy and development cooperation. This, in turn, requires synergies between development cooperation and foreign and security policy.

### ***Stand by long-term commitments and avoid double standards***

Even though democracy holds such a central place in the European story, the EU is largely known as a trade bloc in the rest of the world. The EU is seen as surprisingly shy when it comes to maintaining Europe's fundamental principles, with democracy often giving way to short-term economic or security priorities. This leads counterparts and partners to express doubts about the EU's commitment to democracy in other regions of the world.

When times are tough, should the commitment to democracy and human rights be the first to fall off the table? True, political reality is that interests and priorities compete at times. The message from partners is that the EU should be transparent about its choices in

situations where other goals are given precedence. Such transparency would help manage expectations and enhance the credibility and legitimacy of the EU's long-term commitment to democracy. Lack of transparency, on the other hand, paves the way for accusations of double standards.

The European response to the Hamas victory in the Palestinian elections in 2006 is quoted in all regions, not only in the Arab World, as the prime example of double standards that undermine the credibility of EU calls for democracy and free elections. European credibility is however also weakened by what is labeled as protectionist agricultural, trade and migration policies. For the EU's counterparts, trade is not merely an economic issue: it is a decisive question of whether democratic governments in less prosperous countries will have the opportunity to create economic and social development from within and thereby strengthen the sustainability and accountability of their own democracy.

***Partnerships not preaching, dialogue not declarations***

Partnerships are well established terminology in EU relations with other regions, but less well established in practice. The EU's counterparts strongly express a wish to see the EU meeting them as partners and not as students. The donor-recipient approach to relationships must be abandoned. Resolutions, sanctions and isolation normally lead nowhere. The focus should be on nurturing home-grown initiatives in dialogue with partners. In line with this, the language of democracy promotion, which is seen as a one-way activity, should be replaced by more collaborative language of shared democracy building. In a world where power relations are changing, this is an urgently important message for the EU to take in.

One may ask if such an approach goes well with the insistence that the EU needs to stand by its principles. The resounding response from the multi-regional consultations is yes: true partnerships also include honest dialogue on difficult issues, the willingness to listen not least when there is disagreement. In actual fact the very process of consultations reflected in this report has demonstrated the potential of dialogue. The invitation for partners to scrutinize the EU resulted in more: the deliberations were equally marked by openness about the weaknesses of and challenges to democracy in the various regions themselves. They also produced a desire to take the discussions further towards a shared common agenda for democracy building across the many regions. The desire for such a process holds even more promise than the report itself.

Stockholm, June 2009



Vidar Helgesen  
Secretary-General  
International IDEA



## Summary of findings

EU intentions	Partner perceptions	Gap	Policy options
Democracy is one of the fundamental objectives of EU external action.	The EU is primarily a trade partner and an economic actor.	There are different ideas on what the EU does, and what role it could and should play in democracy building.	<p>The EU's should tap its own internal experiences to inform its external action.</p> <p>The EU needs to apply a broad understanding of democracy.</p> <p>The EU needs to stand by its long-term commitments.</p> <p>The EU should move towards genuine partnerships.</p>
<b>Tap EU's internal experiences to inform external action</b>			
The only explicit reference to the EU's own internal experiences is found in the security policy.	Partners would find it useful to have information about EU's internal experiences across more policy areas.	EU internal experiences across a broad range of areas are an under-utilized resource that could be further exploited.	<p>The EU should formulate its own narrative on democracy building based on the individual experiences of its Member States and on the positive story about EU regional integration.</p> <p>Interest in these experiences relates to a range of areas including mechanisms for successful integration, gender equality, fiscal systems, anti-corruption efforts, minority protection and management of diversity, judicial reform, and democratic control of armed forces. The EU should make these experiences globally available through accessible communications tools.</p>
<b>Apply a broad understanding of democracy</b>			
The EU supports democracy building primarily through electoral assistance and human rights promotion. In its development cooperation, the EU has set democracy as an explicit objective.	EU support for democracy building focuses too much on electoral assistance and human rights promotion and too little on the delivery aspects of democracy. There is a divide between Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and development in terms of policy and action relating to democracy building. This difference is reflected by different language and understandings of democracy.	The EU applies a narrow understanding of democracy: it does not adequately link its support for democracy building to the delivery aspects of democracy. There is scope to explore synergies between CFSP and development cooperation based on their different characteristics and applications on democracy.	<p>The EU should apply a broad understanding of democracy in its external action, seeing democracy as more than a procedure, as something which also needs to deliver the basic needs of the citizens.</p> <p>In order to do so, the Foreign and Security Policy and development cooperation need to be more closely linked. In general terms, development policy focuses on good governance, while the Foreign and Security Policy to a large extent projects support to democracy building as human rights activities, electoral assistance and promotion of fundamental values. The EU should make an effort to further align the focus, contents, approach and methodology of both policy areas. The EU could initiate inter-institutional task forces, bringing together experts to make use of their different perspectives and develop synergies for a more effective support to democracy building.</p> <p>Education plays a key role in fostering democrats. This should be taken into account by the EU and its partners.</p>

<b>Stand by the EU's long-term commitments</b>			
Democracy is one of the long-term objectives of EU's external action	The EU prioritizes short-term stability and trade objectives over the long-term objectives for support to democracy building.	The EU is not able to sustain its long-term democracy objectives in its external action.	Credibility and legitimacy are prerequisites for effective support to democracy building. The EU should signal its commitments and its limitations to its partners in a clear and transparent way to confirm the long-term objectives and to manage partners' expectations.
EU policies and actions are coherent and consistent; EU takes democracy into account within all policy areas.	At the Union level, the EU sometimes comes across as inconsistent and unable to find common positions. It does not consider the effects of its migration, trade, agriculture or security policy on democracy building. Differences come across between the EU on the one hand and the EU Member States on the other; this sometimes causes confusion and sometimes provides alternatives.	Coherence and consistency is not always achieved between policy areas at the EU level. Democracy is not fully covered within all relevant policy areas affecting partners. Member States and EU institutions sometimes come across with different messages; using the same concepts but with different interpretations.	<p>The EU should explore further building synergies between CFSP, development cooperation and other relevant policy areas, recognizing and considering the effects of policies such as trade and migration on democracy building in other regions.</p> <p>The EU should use the advantage of being 27 different Member States to strengthen the common agenda, while strongly discouraging discrepancies between the EU Member States actions and the agreed EU agenda in cases where these affect democracy building adversely.</p>
<b>Move towards genuine partnerships</b>			
The EU employs "democracy promotion" to meet its objectives.	"Democracy promotion" is interpreted as one-way communication. It implies a donor-recipient relationship.	The understanding of genuine partnerships differs between the EU and its partners.	Partnerships should be pursued in a spirit of finding mutual benefits. Dialogue is a core element of partnerships. The EU should undertake a review of its policies and procedures to strengthen its dialogue mechanisms. It should review its work processes to ensure that dialogue with partners is incorporated from an early stage and throughout the entire programme cycle.
The EU employs a <i>partnership approach</i> to meet its long-term objectives on democracy building. The EU addresses democracy building activities with a wide range of actors.	The EU's commitment to partnership as an approach is not fully realized in action, dialogue and attitudes. EU support for democracy building comes across as disproportionately in favour of civil society activities.	There is unexploited potential in further developing the partnership approach. EU does not reach a wide range of actors in its democracy building activities.	The EU should meet the partners where they need EU. The EU should continue to develop inter-regional partnerships where appropriate and feasible. Possible avenues for cooperation at the regional level could be with regional organizations and their democracy initiatives. Inclusive consultation is a tool that should be used more frequently in this regard. Genuine partnerships should be pursued at several levels and with a broad range of actors.

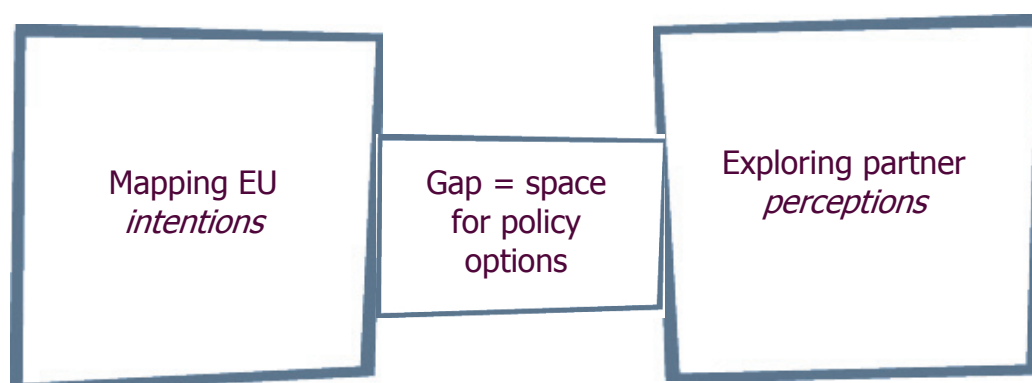
## Part I: Introduction

This report provides options for strengthening EU policies, practices and partnerships in support of democracy building. The policy options presented emerge from comparing the EU's *intentions* in democracy building with the *perceptions* of EU policies and actions by partners. In 2008 and 2009, the International IDEA project *Democracy in Development – global consultations on the EU's role in democracy building* probed the views of partners by holding consultations with regional organizations and think tanks in Africa, the Arab world, Latin America and the Caribbean, South Asia and Southeast Asia.

Part 1 of the report outlines the objectives and methodology of the project. Part 2 compares the EU's intentions with the perceptions of its partners, followed by an analysis of any gaps between intentions and perceptions. Finally, Part 3 provides options for EU policies, practices and partnerships.

### Methodology and hypothesis

The hypothesis underpinning this assessment is, in essence, that a gap exists between the intentions of EU policies and actions and the perceptions of regional partners. Identifying and clearly articulating this gap provides an opportunity to improve dialogue between the EU and its partners in an effort to better develop policies, practices and partnerships.



To identify the EU's *intentions* the project went to EU documents: the treaties, policy documents and strategies which express ambitions, commitments, values and objectives.

The *perceptions* of EU interventions were mapped by engaging partners directly: those who have practical experience of the implementation of the EU's actions and policies at regional and country levels. Five regions were covered: Africa, the Arab world, Latin America and the Caribbean, South Asia and South East Asia. Regional organizations, which are the EU's counterparts, are proxy voices for partner perceptions.

**“Perceptions matter – because they are a basis for understanding and a foundation upon which actors make choices and decisions. Understanding the perceptions and perspectives of the “other” side can provide a basis for improved communication and give guidance on policy adjustments.”**

Ms Ingrid Wetterqvist, Director, International IDEA

The consultations were organized in close cooperation with regional organizations. In the case of Africa, the Arab World and Latin America and the Caribbean, the consultations were organized with their respective regional organizations: the African Union (AU), the League of Arab States (LAS), and the Organization of American States (OAS). In the case of South Asia and Southeast Asia, after communication with the South Asia Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the consultations were organized with their leading think tanks, the South Asia Centre for Policy Studies (SACEPS) and the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), respectively.

Key questions addressed during the consultations included: when you look at the EU, what do you see? How do you think EU policies and actions affect democracy building in your region? What works? What does not? What would you like the EU to do less of, more of or simply differently?

Consultations took place mainly in the form of round table meetings complemented by individual interviews. A number of commissioned articles were used to generate discussion. Stakeholder meetings in Brussels, Strasbourg and Stockholm were also held as a means of reaching out to more actors.

## Definitions

International IDEA does not subscribe to any official definition of democracy, but its *State of Democracy* assessment framework has developed a useful working definition of what the term means.

### **Box 1: IDEA “State of Democracy” principles of Democracy**

The two fundamental principles to democracy, according to the International IDEA “State of Democracy” framework, are popular control over decisions and decision makers and equality of respect and voice between citizens in the exercise of that control.

The realization of these two principles is made possible through seven mediating values: participation, authorization, representation, accountability, transparency, responsiveness, and solidarity.<sup>2</sup>

*Democracy* is understood as a political system where public decision making is subject to popular control and where all citizens have an equal right to participate in this process. Whilst levels of democracy cannot easily be compared between states and democracy can not be easily measured, there are ways to make assessments of the quality of democracy in a state at a given time.

*Democracy building* is about creating the conditions that allow the principles of democracy to be put into practice. In order to be effective, such efforts must be led from within a country – though they can also be supported from the outside. Democracy does not develop in a vacuum: international relations and actions by external parties may affect national and local realities too.

*Democratization* is a long-term and never-ending process aiming to increase the quality of democratic institutions and processes and to build a democratic culture.

Other definitions go beyond International IDEA’s working definition of democracy and include reference to its *contents* and substance. These perspectives and wider understanding of

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<sup>2</sup> International IDEA, 2008

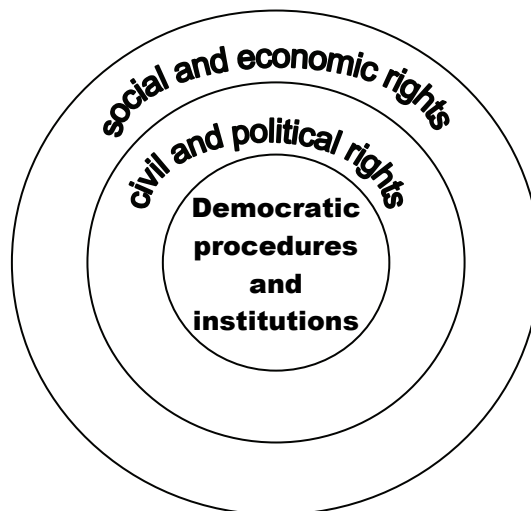
what constitutes democracy emerged in several regions during the consultations (See Box 2: Three definitions of democracy).

**Box 2: Three definitions of democracy**

**“Procedural definitions”** view democracy within the framework of the two dimensions of *contestation* and *participation*. Democracy is seen in terms of the procedures and institutions connected to *elections*.

**“Liberal definitions”** add references to the protection of civil and political rights as criteria for democracy. These definitions contain both an *institutional* dimension and a *rights* dimension.

**“Substantive definitions”** of democracy expand the types of rights that a democracy must protect to include social, economic and cultural rights; adding emphasis on provision of a minimum standard of living (“welfare”) and the progressive realization of the social, economic and cultural rights.<sup>3</sup>



The different definitions of democracy, as presented here, are seen as cumulative.

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<sup>3</sup> Landman, forthcoming

## Part II: Intentions and Perceptions

This section reviews EU policy documents and treaties in order to provide an understanding of EU *intentions* on democracy building. Second, it presents a summary of the perceptions identified based primarily on the findings of IDEA's consultations with EU partners in Africa, the Arab World, Latin America and the Caribbean, South Asia and Southeast Asia. Finally, it analyzes the gap between stated intentions and perceptions.

### Intentions: EU policy documents on democracy building

To understand the EU's intentions and limitations, the institutional complexity of the organization must be recognized. The EU's three main bodies are the European Parliament, representing the people of Europe; the Council of the European Union, representing national governments; and the European Commission, representing the common EU interest. Both the Parliament and the Council have Secretariats. Within the Parliament, the Council and the Commission, and on all levels, there are organizational divides to mirror the separate policy areas. Some policy areas are decided on the common EU level. This is known as the EU *first pillar* and includes for example trade and development cooperation. The Common Foreign and Security Policy, on the other hand, fall under the jurisdiction of the EU Member States in the Council, and is commonly known as the issues under the *second pillar*. In addition, EU Member States have their individual agendas and policies at the national level.

The legal basis for the EU's joint commitment to democracy is found in the Treaty of the European Union, as amended by the Treaties of Amsterdam and Nice, which defines democracy as one of the principles underpinning EU's external action.<sup>4</sup>

#### The Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing European Communities: legal framework for democracy in EU external action

“[EU] is founded on the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law, principles that are common to the Member States”.<sup>5</sup>

“The Union shall define and implement a common foreign and security policy covering all areas of foreign and security policy, the objectives of which shall be:[...]

— to develop and consolidate democracy and the rule of law, and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms”.<sup>6</sup> ... “Community policy in [the area of development cooperation] shall contribute to the general objective of developing and consolidating democracy and the rule of law, and to the objective of respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms”.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Article 6, *Treaty on European Union*, 2006; with the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty democracy would instead become one of the *values* underpinning the external policy (see *Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community* 2007, Article 2)

<sup>5</sup> Article 6, *Treaty on European Union*, 2006

<sup>6</sup> Article 11, *Treaty on European Union* 2006

<sup>7</sup> Article 177:2, *Treaty establishing the European Community*, 2006, see also *ibid*, Article 181a on Economic, Financial and Technical Cooperation with Third Countries.

Democracy is referred to as an *essential objective* for the EU.<sup>8</sup> Democracy is, under the *Treaty on European Union*, a general objective but also an explicit objective to be applied to development cooperation and economic, financial and technical cooperation with third countries<sup>9</sup>.

Should the Lisbon Treaty enter into force, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union will become legally binding. While the Charter is mainly focused on human rights protection, it also includes several provisions on elements on democracy. The Lisbon Treaty, as well as the existing Treaty on European Union, also refers to other European documents such as the Paris Charter for a New Europe (1990) where democracy is referred to and defined in greater detail.

#### **Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union**

“Conscious of its spiritual and moral heritage, the Union is founded on the indivisible, universal values of human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity; it is based on the principles of democracy and the rule of law”.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, the commitment to respect, promote and protect democracy and its principles is often mentioned as an *essential element* of the Community’s agreements with third countries.<sup>11</sup>

#### ***Building on the EU’s own experiences***

Interestingly, the EU’s own experiences of democracy and democratic governance are not given much elaboration in policy documents. The EU’s internal experiences are referred to only with regard to the *newer Member States* and in relation to *security policy*. In the areas of conflict prevention and resolution, the EU’s own experiences are considered to be a strength, making the EU a possible model for other regions.<sup>12</sup>

#### ***Understanding democracy***

Explicit definitions of democracy are rare in EU policy documents. Democracy is more often described in terms of its procedures, structures and institutions. Policy documents contain different concepts of democracy, including good governance, pluralist democracy, democratic governance, democratization, democracy promotion and democracy building. However, indirectly there are more concrete definitions through the Paris Charter as referred to in the Treaties.

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<sup>8</sup> *The European Union’s role in promoting human rights and democratisation in third countries*, 2001, p.4

<sup>9</sup> Article 177:2 and 181a, *Treaty establishing the European Community*, 2006

<sup>10</sup> Preamble, *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union*, 2000

<sup>11</sup> *Communication from the Commission on the inclusion of respect for democratic principles and human rights in agreements between the Community and third countries*, 1995; *European Consensus on Development*, 2006

<sup>12</sup> *Communication from the Commission on Conflict Prevention*, 2001

### The Paris Charter for a New Europe<sup>13</sup>

“We undertake to build, consolidate and strengthen democracy as the only system of government of our nations”.

“Democratic government is based on the will of the people, expressed regularly through free and fair elections. Democracy has as its foundation respect for the human person and the rule of law. Democracy is the best safeguard of freedom of expression, tolerance of all groups of society, and equality of opportunity for each person”.

“Democracy, with its representative and pluralist character, entails accountability to the electorate, the obligation of public authorities to comply with the law and justice administered impartially. No one will be above the law”.<sup>14</sup>

In general terms, policy documents dealing with development policy focus on *good governance* and the related delivery aspects of democracy<sup>15</sup> while the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) focuses more on *democracy promotion* and support for human rights, political institutions and citizen’s participation via civil society and elections. Election observation and electoral assistance are emphasized as important components of the EU’s support for democracy building<sup>16</sup>. Yet the EU also reaffirms its view that democracy consists of more than just elections. Meanwhile, a Commission Communication has proposed *democratic governance* as a broader understanding of democracy which could link EU’s development cooperation to the external relations.<sup>17</sup>

It is stressed that human rights and democratization are closely linked. Human rights play a prominent role in EU policy documents related to democracy. The emphasis on the link between human rights and democracy sometimes go so far as to equate human rights activities with support for democracy building.<sup>18</sup>

**Regulation 1889/2006:** Establishing a financing instrument for the promotion of democracy and human rights worldwide

“Democracy and human rights are inextricably linked. The fundamental freedoms of expression and association are the preconditions for political pluralism and democratic process, whereas democratic control and separation of powers are essential to sustain an independent judiciary and the rule of law which in turn are required for effective protection of human rights”.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Article 11 of the *Treaty on European Union* refers to the objectives of Paris Charter for a New Europe in connection to the provisions on a Common Foreign and Security Policy. The Paris Charter is referred to in connection to the policy objective of peace and international security, but the Paris Charter explicitly links peace building and democracy objectives and can therefore be seen as a link between these policy areas.

<sup>14</sup> *Charter of Paris for a New Europe*, 1990, pp3-5

<sup>15</sup> “Governance concerns the state’s ability to serve the citizens ... Governance refers to the rules, processes, and behaviour by which the interests are articulated, resources are managed, and power is exercised in society” (Communication from the Commission, *Governance and Development*, 2003, p.3)

<sup>16</sup> See e.g. the Commission Communication of 11 April 2000 on *EU Election Assistance and Observation*

<sup>17</sup> *Governance in the European Consensus on Development Towards a harmonised approach within the European Union*, 2006, p.4

<sup>18</sup> See for example the Commission paper *The European Union: Furthering human rights and democracy across the globe*, 2007, which, in spite of the title, only speaks of human rights.

<sup>19</sup> EC regulation no 1889/2006, *Establishing a financing instrument for the promotion of democracy and human rights worldwide*, paragraph 8

## **Mainstreaming and coherence**

Democracy is mainstreamed in all policies. It is discussed in several policy documents as a prerequisite for the achievement of other objectives; for example in development or security. Links between democracy and trade, the environment, migration and other policy areas are also commonly mentioned.<sup>20</sup>

“In addition to its approach towards co-operation programmes the Commission, consistent with its commitment to respect EU Charter will ensure that in the formulation of other policies, any negative effect on human rights and democratisation is always avoided, and wherever possible, policies are adapted to have a positive impact”.<sup>21</sup>

*EU Foreign Policy* tools include traditional diplomacy and financial instruments such as the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). The *EU Security Policy* states that the EU views democracy and security objectives as dependent on each other<sup>22</sup>. However, there is no discussion of how to incorporate support for democracy building into security policy.

*EU Development Policy*, a first pillar matter, also stresses democracy building as a prerequisite for development. Links between development, democracy, and, in particular, good governance are frequently highlighted. Development policy uses tools such as incentives, aid conditionality and essential elements clauses in agreements to encourage democracy building.

“Progress in the protection of human rights, good governance and democratisation is fundamental for poverty reduction and sustainable development”.<sup>23</sup>

The Treaties provide no explicit reference to democracy as an objective for *EU Trade Policy*<sup>24</sup>. However, since democracy is a general objective of EU external action, it applies implicitly also to this policy area.<sup>25</sup> Democracy and political dialogue are also often included as essential components of Economic Partnership Agreements, Free Trade Agreements and Association Agreements negotiated between EU and its partners.

*The European Neighbourhood Policy* (ENP) is described as “a privileged relationship, building upon a mutual commitment to common values” of which democracy is one<sup>26</sup>. The ENP consistently uses the term *democracy*: emphasizing the importance of this common value for the whole neighbourhood policy.

*Migration issues* fall under the area of Justice and Home Affairs. While there are no references in the relevant migration policy documents to democracy, links between immigration policy and development cooperation exist due to the impact of the movement of human capital and the importance of remittances.

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<sup>20</sup> See European Commission, *The European Union's role in promoting human rights and democratisation in third countries*, 2001

<sup>21</sup> European Commission, *The European Union's role in promoting human rights and democratisation in third countries*, 2001, p.7

<sup>22</sup> See European Commission, *Communication from the Commission on Conflict Prevention*, 2001

<sup>23</sup> *European Consensus on Development*, 2005, paragraph 86

<sup>24</sup> Compare Article 133 of the *Treaty establishing the European Community*, 2006, to for example Article 177:2 on Development Policy in the same Treaty. See also [http://ec.europa.eu/trade/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/trade/index_en.htm)

<sup>25</sup> Article 6, *Treaty on European Union*, 2006. See also Article 301, *Treaty on European Union*, 2006

<sup>26</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/policy\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/policy_en.htm)

*Enlargement policy* is generally seen as the policy area where support for democracy building has been the most successful. Countries seeking membership of the EU must meet a set of criteria including “stable institutions guaranteeing democracy”<sup>27</sup>. The term *democracy* is used throughout the policy documents related to enlargement.<sup>28</sup>

#### ***Conditions for EU Accession– the “Copenhagen Criteria”***

In 1993, the Copenhagen European Council established the criteria for membership of the EU. A new Member State must meet certain political and economic criteria including “stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities”.<sup>29</sup>

Many of the different policy documents reviewed point to the need to strengthen coherence with respect to support for democracy building between different policy areas and between EU institutions.

#### ***Partnership***

Many EU policy documents stress the importance of *partnership*. Strategy documents and work programmes exist for the EU’s cooperation with each partner region. Although EU Treaties establish the same fundamental principles for all EU external action, the region-specific documents vary in language, scope and emphasis.

*Africa-EU relations* are guided by the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership which defines the long-term policy orientations between Africa and the EU. It identifies eight thematic partnerships, including one on Democratic Governance and Human Rights. The Partnership on Democratic Governance and Human Rights enables a comprehensive “continent-to-continent dialogue and cooperation” on democratic principles, the fight against corruption, and the accountable management of public funds.

“The Parties reaffirm that democratisation, development and the protection of fundamental freedoms and human rights are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Democratic principles are universally recognised principles underpinning the organisation of the State to ensure the legitimacy of its authority, the legality of its actions reflected in its constitutional, legislative and regulatory system, and the existence of participatory mechanisms. On the basis of universally recognised principles, each country develops its democratic culture”.<sup>30</sup>

*EU-Arab world cooperation* is encapsulated in EU cooperation with the Mediterranean region, as formulated and agreed in the Barcelona and Euro-Med declarations.<sup>31</sup> These are primarily concerned with security and trade relations but also emphasize political dialogue and the importance of democracy. Democracy is referred to in a vague manner, implying that the EU takes a more pragmatic approach to democracy in its cooperation with this region.

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<sup>27</sup> *Conclusions of the Presidency*, European Council in Copenhagen, 1993

<sup>28</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/world/what/enlargement/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/world/what/enlargement/index_en.htm)

<sup>29</sup> *Conclusions of the Presidency*, European Council in Copenhagen, 1993

<sup>30</sup> Article 9(2), *Cotonou Agreement*, 2000

<sup>31</sup> *Communication from The European Commission: Barcelona Process – Union for the Mediterranean*, 1995; *Joint Declaration of the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean*, 2008

“The parties agree to develop the rule of law and democracy in their political systems while recognizing in this framework the right of each of them to choose and freely develop its own political, socio-cultural, economic and judicial system”.<sup>32</sup>

The *EU-Latin America strategy* is comprehensive. This document acknowledges that most countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have established democracies. The strategy therefore goes deeper into the needs and possibilities of the region, using the concept *democratic governance*. Democracy is defined in broader terms here than in the other regional strategies, linking institution-focused support to democracy building with aspects of participation and democracy as a means to deliver also on social, economic and cultural rights, social cohesion and equality issues.<sup>33</sup>

“In Latin America democratic governance and social cohesion are closely connected: exclusion, poverty, limited access to education and healthcare and a lack of prospects restrict the exercise of civic and political rights”.<sup>34</sup>

*EU-Asia cooperation* defines democracy, human rights and good governance as objectives, to be supported by the EU in all its relations with Asia. However, while encouraging dialogue and partnership, the strategy documents are vague on which actions are being taken.

The Europe and Asia Strategic Framework for Enhanced Partnership<sup>35</sup> provides that in order for the EU to increase its political and economic presence in the Asian region, the EU should contribute to the spreading of democracy, good governance and the rule of law. In line with this, the EU shall strengthen bilateral and multilateral dialogue with Asian partners, encourage civil society dialogue, and ensure that human rights and governance issues are mainstreamed in cooperation activities.

The new EU partnership with Southeast Asia<sup>36</sup> provides that the EU shall build constructive partnerships with ASEAN and national governments in Southeast Asia based on dialogue. New bilateral agreements with countries of the region should all contain an ‘essential element’ clause referring to human rights. Moreover, recognizing that good governance is crucial for a stable and prosperous society, the EU’s development co-operation efforts put sufficient emphasis on strengthening institutional and regulatory frameworks and fighting corruption in Southeast Asia.

“the situation in several parts of the region in terms of governance, human rights, democracy and the rule of law is of concern, and will be addressed through the EIDHR”.<sup>37</sup>

*EU relations with Africa, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP)* are further guided by the Cotonou Agreement<sup>38</sup>, aiming at promoting development of the ACP countries. The Cotonou Agreement also aims at “promoting a stable and democratic political environment”. It is explicitly based on the principles of the equality of partners, participation of both government and non-government actors, dialogue and the fulfillment of mutual obligations,

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<sup>32</sup> *Communication from The European Commission: Barcelona Process – Union for the Mediterranean*, 1995

<sup>33</sup> European Commission, *Latin America: Regional Programming document 2007-2013*, 2007

<sup>34</sup> European Commission, *A stronger partnership between The European Union and Latin America*, 2005, p.8

<sup>35</sup> Communication from the Commission, *Europe and Asia: A Strategic Framework for Enhanced Partnerships*, 2001

<sup>36</sup> Communication from the Commission, *A New Partnership with Southeast Asia*, 2003

<sup>37</sup> European Commission, *Regional Programming for Asia: Strategy Document 2007-2013*, 2007

<sup>38</sup> *Cotonou Agreement*, 2000

differentiation and regionalization. The Agreement identifies good governance as essential, the violation of which may lead to the partial or complete suspension of development cooperation.<sup>39</sup>

## **Perceptions from the partner regions**

Although the five partner regions display fundamental differences – and despite the fact that they all pursue very different relations with the EU – they hold a remarkable number of views in common.

All five regions express the view that the EU, as a political actor, is an attractive partner in democracy building. At the same time, it must be pointed out that the EU is largely perceived as a trade partner and an economic actor.

**“I think the European Union should play the role of a leader in the promotion of democracy outside of Europe, because EU is a particularly credible role model.”**

**Ms Saumura Tioulong, Member of Parliament, Cambodia**

### ***Interest in EU's internal experiences***

The EU is recognized by its partners as a successful model of economic development and democracy building. The EU's history in economic and political regional integration is seen as an inspiration to other regions seeking to achieve similar levels of integration. The success of the EU in building peaceful cooperation structures and deepening integration was a recurrent theme in discussions, as well as EU experiences in managing diversity. Across all regions, there is an expressed interest in learning more from EU's experiences, especially in democracy building

**“EU stands for equality in terms of access and opportunity”.**

**Ambassador Muhammad Zamir, former Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the European Communities**

The EU is seen to have managed to combine democratic politics with social stability and economic dynamism. EU Member States are stable and provide the basic needs of human security, human dignity and equal opportunities for citizens, including progress on gender equality. Living standards have improved dramatically in EU Member States.

**“Europe can show us in Asia how they managed to develop their community, how they developed a more caring social welfare system, how they managed to lift everybody up from poverty where some of the European countries also suffered before, by giving us the best practices and not just by preaching”.**

**Dr Dewi Fortuna Anwar, Deputy Chairman for Social Sciences and Humanities, Indonesian Institute of Sciences**

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<sup>39</sup> Article 9, *Cotonou Agreement*, 2000

The EU has moved successfully from being a continent ravaged by war to becoming a region that resolves conflict peacefully. Military power has given way to the dominance of *civilian rule* – rule built on value-based social structures, the rule of law and inclusive political systems.

**The experience of EU in overcoming threats to democracy and achieving prosperity for the people is something I think EU should spread the word about; not just the economic integration but overcoming involvement of the military, overcoming the problems of poverty and discussing the redistribution of the fruits of national and regional progress, tolerance of religious minorities and upholding the rule of law.”**

**Ambassador Rodolfo Severino, former Secretary-General of ASEAN**

The EU is also an example of successful regional integration. By creating working structures and mechanisms for regional cooperation the EU has improved its position in global negotiations. Common challenges in the region are met more efficiently through common discussion and common solutions. Although the EU is sometimes accused of being overly bureaucratic or its decisions based on the “lowest common denominator”, it is nevertheless viewed as an impressive and functional mechanism for inter-state cooperation.

**“EU cannot play a direct role – these are proud countries and do not like an intrusive approach of dictating what is to be done – but must have a low-key, low profile constructive approach, for example by sharing best practices”.**

**Ambassador A. N. Ram, former Ambassador of India to the EU**

### **Narrow understanding of democracy**

Across all regions there is a strong emphasis on *social cohesion, inequality, social instability/insecurity* as well as the *inability of governments to deliver*. All consultations stressed the link between a democratic system and visible changes in societies. Generally, partners consider that the EU applies a narrow understanding of democracy, failing to link procedural democracy to delivery aspects of democracy.

**“Perhaps the biggest challenge which we are faced with today is how to make democracy an every-day business of the people, not just an event that occurs intermittently once every four years.”**

**Professor Adebayo Olukoshi, Executive Director, Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) and member of the International IDEA Board of Advisers**

There is also some inconsistency in EU terminology. The term *democracy* is used in the Neighbourhood Policy or in the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) to refer primarily to human rights and the procedural aspects of democratic practice. In other policy areas the term *democracy* is absent, or appears in the form of an adjective. Development cooperation emphasizes the concept of *good governance* which it links to democracy.

**“A fixation on natural electoral practices, without considerations of broader democratic practices in the economy and social sphere, creates skepticism. There is much in the African experience that suggests that a broader view of democracy building that encompasses social dynamics is not only necessary, but essential for any of the policy perspectives that we are seeking to establish”**

**H.E. Sir Ketumile Masire, former President of Botswana**

However, the EU appears to have separated the procedural and institutional aspects of democracy from what it can deliver. The EU's partners perceive the EU to focus disproportionately on civil society, elections and human rights activities. Partners also reiterate that democracy is more than elections and must not simply be equated with human rights but must also deliver in a broader sense.

**“Protecting human rights is not democracy. Human rights are essential for democracy and there are no contradictions between them. Human rights protection, however, is not the priority area in terms of democracy building”**

**Professor S.D. Muni Senior Visiting Scholar, Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore**

### **EU long-term commitments**

The EU is often described as a credible partner who prefers to use soft power in international relations, rather than hard power or military might. This is considered to be a positive feature from a developmental perspective. The EU should consider putting a higher value on its soft power approach rather than focusing too much on the difficulty it often encounters in exercising hard power.

On a more negative note, partners perceive the EU to apply double standards and be unable to transform its policies into action. EU support for democracy building is sometimes viewed as a paper commitment only. In particular, the EU's commitment to stand by democracy even in the face of "realpolitik" is questioned: the EU is accused of allowing economic and security interests override long-term support for democracy building. At times, this creates a credibility gap.

**"There is a serious need for the EU to reconsider its present approach to the issue of promoting democracy in the Arab World. There are structural problems reflected in a conflict between the main objectives of many members of the EU: security and trade on the one hand and the promotion of democracy on the other".**

**Dr Kheir el-Din Haseeb, Director-General, the Centre for Arab Unity Studies, Lebanon**

The discrepancy between EU policies and actions is a particularly striking perception in the Arab world. The 2006 elections in the Palestinian Territories are frequently cited as an example of the EU failing to stand by its commitment to democracy as it was seen not to accept the outcome of an election which was widely recognized as free and fair. Another example is how the EU Return Directive in migration policy is perceived to have affected Latin American development adversely. Both examples are seen to seriously affect the EU's credibility.

The EU does not come across with a coherent message in the area of democracy building. It is seen to send inconsistent messages across the partner regions and countries, demonstrating different levels of commitment and setting different standards in different cases. This is considered to be an impediment to effective cooperation.

**"EU really has not developed a common agenda on democracy".**

**Professor Rehman Sobhan, Founder and Executive Chairman, Centre for Policy Dialogue, Bangladesh**

There is also a perceived incoherence and inconsistency between the Common Foreign and Security Policy and development cooperation. These policy areas move along different timelines, work according to divergent logics under separate pillars and legal provisions; and using different sets of tools. As long as these two policy areas operate in isolation, the lack of coherence is not problematic. When they cross paths however – as is regularly the case with support for democracy building – this produces unnecessary tension and inconsistency in how the EU operates.

The EU's policy documents are clear in their commitment to coherence and the mainstreaming of democracy. The need for consistency is widely recognized. In spite of this, EU partners stress the lack of mainstreaming and consistency as one of the main challenges

in their relationship with the EU, and that the EU does not recognize and consider the effects that its actions may have on democracy building in the partner regions. Discrepancy in the messages and the effects of e.g. migration policy, agricultural policy or trade/tariffs as compared to the ambitions of EU's foreign and security policy and development cooperation was identified, especially by the partners in Latin America and the Caribbean. Furthermore, mainstreaming efforts seem not to include all relevant EU policy areas.

**"If Europe does not align its migration policy with its trade policy, with its democracy promotion policy, we are in serious trouble. If the Europe we perceive is a Europe that turns back immigrants, that imposes tariffs in commerce and at the same time a Europe that asks how they can help us – then there is a very important contradiction. On the contrary, the type of relation that we need is one based on mutual respect and common interest."**

**Dr Daniel Zovatto, Regional Director for Latin America, International IDEA**

Another source of scepticism is the observation by many of the EU's partners that sometimes the priorities of a few individual Member States guide EU priorities; in which case the EU is perceived to be a vehicle for pursuing narrow national interests. National cooperation programmes are not necessarily carried out in concert with EU support for democracy building. Sometimes there is even perceived competition between individual Member States and EU agendas. This perception is however balanced with recognition by partners that there are also occasions where the different experiences and approaches of individual EU Member States are an asset and can be useful for comparative purposes.

Partners emphasize the need for a long-term approach. Support for democracy building today is seen as too short-term, while all agree that democracy building should be a long-term endeavour.

**"EU engages, disengages, connects, and then disconnects, so its efforts become very sporadic and very disjointed. At the end of the day it is all fragmented and nothing hangs together as a big picture. I think the EU needs to have a complete vision of where it wants Africa to be and then begin to channel its assistance towards this broader vision".**

**Dr Annie Chikwanha, Member of the International IDEA Board of Advisors and Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Security Studies in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

### **Partnership**

The partners affirm outright that democracy must be built from within. They condemn *democracy promotion* as an approach which essentially embodies one-way communication. Democracy promotion is seen to be arrogant, based on a belief that European values can be exported to other regions.

The perception is that democracy promotion, understood to a large extent to be a way of preaching, is still dominating EU's repertoire. EU partners have an interest in cooperating with the EU on democracy and therefore emphasize that alternative approaches built on *dialogue* must be developed.

The desire for *real partnership* is a recurring theme across the regions. Partners stress the need for processes in which both parties participate as equals and where there is a mutual exchange of ideas, priorities and information. The EU is seen as heading in the right direction in this regard, but there is still a long way to go. Too often initiatives relating to a region or a country are effectively developed in Brussels and then presented to, rather than discussed with, the region or country in question.

**“It is necessary that we take a broader view of our neighbors and appreciate that there is much that we can learn and much greater value can be derived from mutually respectful relationships”**

**H.E. Sir Ketumile Masire, former President of Botswana**

There are concerns about exactly how much space for participation in dialogue and negotiation is left open for the partners. Partners often cite internal EU mechanisms which ensure that the 27 Member States spend most of the time in designing and deciding on programmes. Decisions finally emerging from such wrangling leave little room for partners to actually have a say and have ownership: they come in too late in the process.

**“EU countries are models of democracy and democracy is deep rooted in their culture and the political system. But at the same time, the problems of EU and the problems of the developing world are different; therefore local emphasis, local focus and local variation are also necessary”.**

**Dr S.Y. Quraishi, Election Commissioner, India**

Partners emphasize the absence of consultative mechanisms between the EU and regional partners in the development of common strategies and cooperation agendas in the area of democracy building. This is an area where there is much unused potential.

Finally, there are strong feelings that the attitudes of some EU representatives show a lack of respect for cooperation partners. There are not infrequent claims that EU representatives “talk down” to their partners, thereby undermining the very foundations of partnership.

**“There should be a change in attitude. If we say there is an equal partnership then I say we are lying to ourselves – everyone knows that it is not. Sometimes our voices are not taken note of, our concerns are not registered. Once we acknowledge that, we can work from that basis and develop a real partnership. Let us treat each other with respect, let us acknowledge each other, let us jointly work towards our common objectives, and let us listen to each other”.**

**Mr Andrew Bradley, Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs and Human Development of the ACP Secretariat in Brussels, Belgium**

## Gap analysis: mirroring perceptions and intentions

Comparing the EU's intentions with partner perceptions revealed various gaps. The EU has an interest in being a global actor in democracy building, a view which was endorsed in the consultations with partners. This provides common ground for continued discussion between the EU and its partners on *what* this engagement should entail and *how* it should be further developed.

Although the EU sees itself as both a political and an economic actor, some partners still see the EU primarily as a trade bloc – and thereby less relevant in democracy building. The EU, therefore, does not fully come across as the political actor it aspires to be.

**“When I look at the EU, I see a world power that does not know how powerful it is. I look at a world power that has a problem of identity. There is a problem in the communication of what the EU is”.**

**Dr Marta Lagos, Executive Director, Latinobarómetro, Chile**

### ***Interest in the EU's own experiences***

European success stories are a recurring theme across the other regions. Although all regions need to adapt solutions to the regional and local context, there is a widespread interest in accessing more information on the EU's own experience on democracy and development. There is a clear demand from all regions for the EU to share its experience and knowledge in an open and honest manner – offering information as inspiration, not preaching.

The significant interest of partners in information sharing on the EU's experience is not mentioned by the EU itself in any of its policies. EU internal experiences within a broad range of areas are an under-utilized resource that could be further exploited.

**“For us, it is amazing to see that the whole of Europe is at peace. Maybe you in Europe take it so much for granted that you don't even realize that for us, this is a miracle”.**

**Ms Saumura Tioulong, Member of Parliament, Cambodia**

### ***A narrow or a broad understanding of democracy***

The EU applies a narrow understanding of democracy: it does not adequately link its support for democracy building to the delivery aspects of democracy. There is scope for the EU to develop this understanding of democracy to facilitate greater synergies between what its current policies term "democracy" and the activities defined as "good governance".

**“I think we are at a stage where we have to go from electing democratically to governing democratically. We should go beyond formal elections and fight corruption, ensure the separation of powers, independence of the judiciary, gender equity and freedom of expression”**

**Ms Irene Klinger, Director, Department of International Affairs, Secretariat for External Relations, Organization of American States (OAS)**

European countries are themselves built on an understanding of democracy as something more than elections and the provision of a minimum of political or civil rights. All EU Member States have systems and instruments to ensure that their citizens have the means and resources for acquiring their basic needs. It could be argued that it would therefore be easy for the EU to embrace the broad understanding of democracy also in its external relations. This is an area of unexploited political credibility.

### ***Different understandings of the EU's long-term commitment to democracy***

Support for democracy building must not be seen to be the “first to go” when priorities conflict. To prioritize short-term stability concerns over long-term partnership- and democracy building will not solve security issues; most likely it will merely postpone them. It must be recognized that democracy building is part of the solution and not a hindrance to objectives such as trade and security. In the long run, supporting democracy building as a foundation for development, trade and security, is the most sustainable and effective approach.

At present, the EU is not able to sustain its long-term democracy objectives in its external action. Coherence and consistency is not always achieved between policy areas at the EU level. Democracy is not fully covered within all relevant policy areas affecting partners. Member States and EU institutions sometimes come across with different messages.

These issues are of vital importance because of the negative effects they have on the EU's *credibility* as an actor – credibility which is a cornerstone for building partnerships.

**“I want to see that EU revisits different aspects of our relationship; because you are on top of the strongest candidates for us, the closest to us and therefore the one who should best understand us. But we and you need to change. We should be able to remove from our heads that you have a hidden agenda; and you should remove from your heads that you know the recipe for what needs to be done”.**

**Ambassador Raouf Saad, Senior Assistant to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt**

### ***Different understandings of EU's partnership approach***

*Partnership* and the role of partners – the need to build inclusive and mutual relationships – are frequently emphasized in EU policies and strategies. Partners themselves appreciate this stance. Yet there are also perceptions that the EU is still playing too dominant a role in these so-called cooperative relations.

In this regard, the recurrent use of the term "promotion" in EU language is not seen as helpful as it does not indicate dialogue. If the EU truly believes that democracy is built from within, it must consider sometimes taking a step back and offer constructive advice in the form of options and information. The EU is more likely to be successful in reaching its ambitious objectives by adopting a more humble approach, while at the same time being prepared to act more forcefully when fundamental values are abused.

The understanding of real partnerships differs between the EU and its partners. However, there is unexploited potential to further develop the partnership approach.

The gaps identified here are most probably explained by a combination of miscommunication and a difficulty with translating principles into real action. Policy documents from different EU sources which say different things are a source of confusion. Overall, the EU's policies are well developed and already contain the foundations and legal framework for a forward-oriented approach and commitment to democracy. The EU might need to bring these policies together on a common platform to support democracy-building; and to complement the policies with mechanisms to implement commitments in practice.

**“Democracy must be built from bottom to top and not from top to bottom”.**

**Dr Ibrahim Assane Mayaki, Chief Executive Officer of the NEPAD Secretariat and former  
Prime Minister of Niger**

## Part III. A way forward

Across the various regions, gaps were identified between EU intentions and partner perceptions. The analysis also provided options for addressing these gaps and to inform the ongoing debate about EU support for democracy building. Four broad areas for policy development emerged: *tap the EU's internal experiences to inform external action, apply a broad understanding of democracy, stand by long-term commitments, and move towards genuine partnerships.*

### Tap the EU's internal experiences to inform external action

*The EU should formulate its own narrative on democracy building based on the individual experiences of its Member States and its experience of becoming a community as a whole. These experiences relate to e.g. gender equality, fiscal systems, anti-corruption efforts, minority protection and management of diversity, judicial reform, and democratic control of armed forces. They also relate to regional integration. The EU should make these experiences available through accessible communications tools, thereby making them global public goods.*

**“The European Union is our inspiration - not quite our model because of the differences among us – but an inspiration”**

**Dr Surin Pitsuwan, Secretary-General of ASEAN**

Partners see the EU's own experiences as an asset that could be capitalized on, yet the EU makes little use of it. Although European experiences cannot simply be applied elsewhere, partners expressed a strong interest to learn from them.

*The EU should formulate its narrative.* Sharing information – not as a means of preaching but as a genuine offer to interested partners – will require a concerted effort by the EU to assemble and present its own experiences. This process would provide a much needed platform for EU policymakers to develop a consistent and coherent approach to democracy building. It will also force the EU to think about how to communicate in a clear and consistent way with partners.

*The EU should capitalize on its own internal experiences both from individual Member States and the Community as whole.* It would be advantageous to exploit both the EU common experiences and the 27 different stories of EU Member States. The EU has a common commitment to democracy as an objective but individual EU Member States have implemented and translated the principles of democracy into processes and institutions in different ways. This represents a considerable resource to tap into from which the EU can formulate a range of policy options for democracy building. The material could be presented in the form of searchable databases or electronic libraries available for others to access. The EU should explore the best means available to facilitate access to its diverse experiences of democracy building as global public goods.



**“There are the varieties of so-called European experiences and models – the Scandinavian model, the UK model, the central European model... the role EU can play depends on which particular nuance in EU model is applicable for the time being for each individual country”.**

**Dr Juwono Sudarsono, Minister of Defence of the Republic of Indonesia**

A number of specific areas were identified where the EU could usefully contribute its own experience: the relationship between the citizen and the state, accountability and responsiveness issues. There is also a demand for sharing the EU’s experience in areas of fiscal systems and how to achieve social cohesion and gender equality; anti-corruption efforts; minority protection, political inclusion; judicial reform and democratic control over the armed forces.

There are also demands for information on regional integration within the EU and what has been learnt at different stages of EU enlargement. The Regional Development Funds and the use of *Acquis Communautaire*<sup>40</sup> are particularly relevant because they are used respectively to promote home-grown development and provide concrete objectives to be achieved within a set time frame.

**"We have *something*, that is very important – we don't have *everything*. We should not be carried away by our own European discourse but instead try to see the big picture".**

**Prof. Poul Nielson, former EU Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid**

*The EU should make these experiences available globally through accessible communications methods. The exchange of information should go both ways. First, by inviting the EU and its partners to contribute and provide information, knowledge and lessons learned. Second, the EU should recognize that there are experiences in partner regions that the EU could learn from and which could help inform policy development. Such basic information sharing can provide a basis for a more constructive international discourse on democracy building. Moreover, it can be achieved in the short term and at little cost but potentially with significant gains for both sides.*

### **Apply a broad understanding of democracy**

*The EU should apply a broad understanding of democracy to its external actions by seeing democracy not only as a procedural affair, but also as a means of meeting the basic needs of citizens. Such an approach would require the Common Foreign and Security Policy to be more closely linked to development cooperation. The EU should make an effort to further align the focus, contents, approach and methodology of both policy areas. For this purpose, the EU could initiate inter-institutional task forces, bringing together experts and practitioners to make use of their different perspectives and develop synergies for more effective support to democracy building. The EU should also further strengthen its support for education as a contribution to long-term democracy building.*

**“EU should do more in terms of *strengthening institutional stability* and *work on the poverty problems*. Social cohesion should be linked very much with strengthening of democratic institutions”.**

**Mr José Miguel Insulza, Secretary-General of the Organization of American States**

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<sup>40</sup> The term *acquis communautaire* is used to refer to the total body of EU law accumulated thus far.

*EU should apply a broad understanding of democracy to its external actions.* The EU is seen by the partner regions as a success story, and the major reason is the European ability to combine political freedom with economic and social development for the population at large. EU partners find a paradox in that the EU has a more narrow approach to democracy in its external actions than it has so successfully applied at home.

**“In Thai we use the word *eatable democracy*, meaning that we have to make democracy work for the poor to make them have a better life, better healthcare, better education... that is *eatable democracy*”.**

**Dr Siripan Nogsuan Sawasdee, Associate Professor, Department of Government,  
Chulalongkorn University, Thailand**

Across the regions, many countries face challenges of social cohesion because states are unable to meet the basic needs of citizens. This is often exacerbated by political polarization and disagreement about the “rules of the democratic game” in many countries. A failure to address this problem may lead to discontent with democracy, and in turn with support for democracy building. Economic exclusion can make democracy fragile and even more so if coupled with practices of political exclusion. EU partners understand this as they have presented a strong appeal for the EU to approach democracy and development in a connected fashion – dealing with both democracy and governance issues. A central message is that democracy must deliver and the EU should affirm its intention to work with the partners on this assumption.

**“If you don’t have the basic social and economic rights seen to, going to vote seems like a luxury one cannot afford. The key message to EU should be the need to contribute to a better life for individuals, by empowering them economically and politically”.**

**Ms Anissa Hassouna, Board Member and Treasurer of the Egyptian Council for Foreign  
Affairs, Egypt**

*The EU Foreign and Security Policy and development cooperation need to be closer interlinked. The EU should make an effort to further align the focus, contents, approach and methodology of both policy areas.* The two policy areas most actively addressing democracy building are development cooperation and the Common Foreign and Security Policy. These policy areas work under different pillars, logics, time frames and with different tools. The potential of the EU could be better realized by combining the efforts of these policy areas, thereby developing synergies. If the speed and decisiveness of the foreign and security policy could be complemented with the long-term engagement and partnership approach of development cooperation – with its emphasis on local context and local ownership – and if the technical knowledge of development cooperation could be combined with the political approach of foreign and security policy, the EU’s democracy building efforts would become more effective.

**Having been Minister for both development cooperation and foreign affairs, I must admit that bringing these policy areas together might at times seem like a huge challenge. It is however, very important to continue this ambition, since reality is about the whole, not the parts.”**

**Ms Lena Hjelm-Wallén, Chairperson of the International IDEA Board of Advisors,  
Sweden**

*The EU could initiate inter-institutional task forces. To this end, the EU could benefit from initiating joint task forces, where appropriate, to facilitate cross-pillar and inter-institutional discussion and action on democracy issues. By bringing together foreign and security policy and development policy experts and practitioners to make use of their different perspectives, synergies can be developed for a more effective approach to democracy building. Establishing democracy in its own right and for the long-term as a policy area for the EU is an option to be considered.*

**“The uneducated and unemployed youth is the political dent in Africa. If we do not intervene, democracy will be in peril”**

**Dr Ibrahim Assane Mayaki, Chief Executive Officer of NEPAD, Former Prime Minister of Niger**

*The EU should further strengthen and develop its education support as means of supporting long-term democracy building. Bringing in the delivery aspects of democracy means considering ways to link support to democracy building with development of e.g. education, health care and infrastructure. A major challenge to the building of sustainable democracy identified in the consultations with the various regions is the need to fix inadequate or underdeveloped education systems. This makes it clear that support for democracy building should include support for the development of education systems.*

**“The fundamental foundation of a democracy is the people; the level of education is key to the political culture of the population. Political culture is whether people accept dictatorship, accept democratic principles. I think the European Union can play a great role in shaping this political culture through strengthening educational development”.**

**Mr Virak Ou, President of the Cambodian Center for Human Rights, General Secretary of the Alliance for Freedom of Expression**

## **Stand by long-term commitments**

*Credibility and legitimacy are prerequisites for maintaining support for democracy building. The EU should signal its commitments and its limitations in a clear and transparent dialogue with partners, in order to confirm long-term objectives and to manage partners' expectations. The EU should align its policies beyond foreign and security policy and development cooperation, recognizing and considering the effects of policies such as trade and migration on the sustainability of democracy in partner regions. The EU use the advantage of being 27 different Member States to strengthen the common agenda, while discouraging discrepancies between the EU Member States actions and the agreed EU agenda in cases where these affect democracy building adversely.*

Among the more negative perceptions by the EU's partners, and perhaps one of the more sensitive to address, is the accusation of double standards and hidden agendas. While the partners appreciate that foreign policy implies the making of hard choices and that total consistency is not always achievable, perceptions of hidden agendas and applying double standards affects EU credibility and leverage. Within the highly politicized area of democracy building it is especially important to maintain credibility.

*The EU should signal its commitments and its limitations to its partners in a clear and transparent way to confirm the long-term objectives and to manage partners' expectations. The partners recommend that the EU should communicate its purposes and objectives clearly as the means of coping with competing objectives without losing trust and credibility. On occasions where democracy or*

human rights give way to other objectives, partners would like this to be expressed up front. The EU should also be *seen to deliver* on the priorities set and the actions promised because partners will assess the EU's credibility based on actual experience. The EU should signal its commitment to the values and norms not only in policy preambles but also in its actions. This means standing up for democracy also when short-term security objectives seem to make exceptions acceptable. A policy dealing with how to react to "unwanted" outcomes of democratic elections should be developed to avoid a repetition of the response to the elections in Palestine 2006. Finally, the EU should also be transparent about the institutional complexity and competing agendas that sometimes prevent a coherent approach.

**"We need you to show that you are really willing to support our work on a long-term basis. By all means, five years for many of the Southeast countries only means one cycle of the government, and one election. EU's commitment to democracy building should really go beyond five years"**

**Dr Hana Satrijo, Director for Gender and Women's Participation, Indonesia, The Asia Foundation**

The EU should align its policies beyond foreign and security policy and development cooperation, recognizing and considering the effects of policies such as trade and migration on democracy building in other regions. There is a strong insistence by partners, as well as recognition by the EU itself, that issues such as migration, trade and security are important to democracy building. Still, the partners observe that this recognition is not mirrored by action. The EU should conduct a thorough review of opportunities for mainstreaming democracy into migration, neighbourhood, trade and security policy. A broad understanding of democracy should be applied to each stage of policy development: from setting objectives, to designing programmes, implementation, monitoring and evaluation; and when assessing proposals for financial contributions.

The EU should use the advantage of being 27 different Member States to strengthen the common agenda, while discouraging discrepancies between the EU Member States actions and the agreed EU agenda in cases where these affect democracy building adversely. The experiences of the 27 Member States can be an asset because they provide multiple sources of information. However, on occasion, the agendas run by individual Member States can contradict the EU's jointly agreed position.

While there are many situations in which a division of labour between the Member States can be a useful approach, Member States should also be mindful not to let their individual priorities overtake the agreed EU agenda. Peer pressure could be exercised to discourage behaviour that adversely affects the commonly agreed approach to democracy building.

### **Move towards genuine partnerships**

*Peer dialogue is a core element of partnerships. The EU should undertake a review of its policies, procedures and practices in order to strengthen its dialogue mechanisms. It should ensure that dialogue with partners is incorporated from an early stage and throughout every programme cycle. Genuine partnerships should be pursued at several levels and with a broad range of actors. Dialogue should always be kept open, not least in cases where the EU and its partners disagree on fundamentals. The EU should seek mutual benefits for all partners and continue to develop inter-regional partnerships where appropriate and feasible. People-to-people exchange programmes should be promoted. These could be for parliamentarians, civil servants, civil society actors and students.*

**“EU should be playing the role of a catalyst, not the role of a teacher”.**

**Ambassador Hesham Youssef, Chef de Cabinet for Amre Moussa, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States**

*The EU should undertake a review of its policies and procedures to strengthen its dialogue mechanisms. The EU is perceived sometimes to project its own priorities on its partners with little willingness to listen. However, the EU’s external actions will only be successful and sustainable by taking into account the needs and perspectives of neighbours and partners. For this reason democracy building should be largely designed in consultation with partners.*

**“EU needs the humility to learn, to listen, to engage – even if it might be extremely difficult to engage as equals and to engage in the spirit of partnership”.**

**Professor Adebayo Olukoshi, Executive Director, Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) and member of the International IDEA Board of Advisers**

The EU should change the one-sided language often used in its policies and strategies, shifting from *democracy promotion* to dialogue-based support for democracy building. A starting point for such dialogue is already found in the Cotonou Agreement<sup>41</sup>, which could be used as an inspiration for other agreements and which needs to be further implemented and applied in the interaction with the ACP countries. “Dialogue” as a concept does not preclude addressing difficult issues in a frank way but presupposes an exchange between two equal partners and is therefore more likely to create openness to critical reflection and change. The dialogue approach should entail more two-way exchanges, including discussions on different models and experiences of democracy. Preaching and promotion practices should be weeded out of policies, procedures and internal management culture.

*The EU should ensure that dialogue with partners is incorporated from an early stage and at each stage of the programme cycle. For this to occur, increased emphasis should be placed on engaging partners in all relevant work processes. The partners should be an integral part of the full process, involving them at the early stages of designing programmes and activities right through to evaluation and dialogue on lessons learnt for future cooperation. By engaging the partners early, programmes and strategies can more easily be adapted to the context-specific needs.*

*Genuine partnerships should be pursued at several levels and with a broad range of actors. While reinforcing dialogue with the executive branches of government on the one hand and including civil society on the other, the critical role of the political establishment – political parties, movements, legislatures – needs considerably more attention in EU democracy building efforts.*

**"The history between Africa and EU has been one of unequal exchanges. We cannot talk about partnerships if there is no equity".**

**Professor Sheila Bunwaree, Faculty of Social Studies and Humanities, University of Mauritius**

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<sup>41</sup> Cotonou Agreement, Article 8

*Dialogue should always be kept open, not least in cases where the EU and its partners disagree on fundamentals.* In some countries, partnership and a direct exchange about democracy might not be possible. In such situations, the regional organizations provide a platform to discuss difficult issues. A space for dialogue should always be kept open, if at all possible. Democracy should be kept on the long-term agenda and pushed with different fervour at different times, complemented with indirect support for democracy building. Engaging in discussions on the partner's main priorities gives the EU leverage and an entry point for pushing its own priorities.

*The EU should find avenues for partnerships where there are mutual benefits for all partners and it should continue to develop inter-regional partnerships where appropriate and feasible.* The EU needs to actively look for entry points and “home grown” avenues for deeper cooperation on democracy building. There will be different entry points and windows of opportunity in each region.

In the case of Africa, the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership provides a promising avenue for enhanced partnership between Africa and the EU, based on reciprocity, predictability, equality, and mutual respect. The EU, however, needs to fully recognize and take into consideration the challenges that Africa is facing in formulating, coordinating, and implementing policies. Also, the EU should recognize the important role the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) can play as the building blocks for democracy building and continental integration in Africa and support them accordingly.

In the case of the Arab world, the EU can only be an effective partner when co-operation is undertaken with mutual respect and shared responsibility. Engagement between the EU and the Arab world should be based on a genuine long-term partnership, encompassing multiple stakeholders. To this end, the League of Arab States (LAS) and its work on reform present an avenue for engagement. Inter-regional dialogue and co-operation under the auspices of the LAS are often welcome and useful to individual Arab States.

**“The process of reform in the Arab world started already, the movement towards reform might be slow and the scope might not be enough, but people do recognize that the reform process has started. The march towards democracy is also moving in the right direction. Yet, we do admit that the road ahead is still long, and the issue is not democracy to suit certain inclinations or to serve specific purposes, but rather a true democracy that contributes in reforming societies and assisting them in the transition to a new phase towards full democracy”.**

**Mr Amre Moussa, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States**

In the case of Latin America and the Caribbean, the EU should recognize that a renewed partnership must be based on equality and include and build on coherence between all policy areas, from development cooperation to trade, migration, and security. In this regard, the EU could consider developing, together with Latin America and the Caribbean, the framework for continued substantive political dialogue. Also, the EU should consider scaling up diplomatic efforts with Cuba as part of the regional approach to integration and democracy building.

**“The Caribbean needs to engineer a new partnership with the European Union. *Partnership* here means a kind of international cooperation where a group of countries identifies common interest, objectives, solutions and then each partner country will undertake responsibilities according to its own economic and political capacities to generate shared benefits<sup>42</sup>”.**

**Dame Billie Miller, former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and International Business, Barbados**

In the case of South Asia, EU engagement with SAARC may need to be re-examined in light of the limited progress so far. Specific programmes for strengthening democracy could make EU-SAARC cooperation more meaningful. In particular, the SAARC Social Charter provides such a regional avenue. The EU could also share experiences on the development of a bill of rights/obligations for democracies in South Asia or through a South Asian Democratic Charter.

**“The EU leadership should communicate with South Asian leaders its continued interest in holding dialogue on democratic growth and human rights improvements in South Asia. It should express its desire to promote exchanges of views between European and South Asian policymakers on good practices in these fields and to build a partnership between the EU and South Asia on democracy in development”.**

**Dr Kant K. Bhargava, former Secretary-General of SAARC and Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Democracy, Queen’s University, Kingston, Canada**

In the case of Southeast Asia, the EU needs to engage ASEAN Member States as well as ASEAN, particularly given the intention enshrined in its Charter “to ensure democracy, enhance good governance and the rule of law”. Any relationship in Southeast Asia should take into account differences in each country. The EU may find feasible avenues for engagement with ASEAN to include the blueprints of the ASEAN Political Security Community, the ASEAN Economic Community and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, as well as the ASEAN human rights body, which will be established in 2009.

*People-to-people exchange programmes should be promoted. These could be for parliamentarians, civil servants, civil society actors and students.* The EU should develop more opportunities for people-to-people exchange: for example through study trips for members of parliament and civil servants; exchange programmes between educational institutions; and cultural exchanges. Mechanisms to facilitate mobility, such as reviewing visa requirements could be addressed in this regard.

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<sup>42</sup> Dame Billie Miller quotes from the report *Rethinking U.S.–Latin American Relations A Hemispheric Partnership for a Turbulent World*, 2008, p.7

## **The International IDEA project Democracy in Development – global consultations on the EU’s role in democracy building:**

- The project was initiated in 2008 and supported by Sweden
- The basic project methodology involves comparing EU intentions with partner perceptions of the EU’s policies and actions in democracy building
- Consultations were held with EU partners in Africa, the Arab world, Latin America and the Caribbean, South Asia and Southeast Asia.
- These consultations were complemented with bilateral meetings, interviews and smaller workshops.
- Over 65 background articles were commissioned.
- More than 250 policy makers, academics, and representatives from think tanks and civil society were consulted during the process.

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## INTERNATIONAL IDEA AT A GLANCE

### Our mission

In a world where democracy cannot be taken for granted, the mission of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is:

***to support sustainable democratic change through providing comparative knowledge, and assisting in democratic reform, and influencing policies and politics.***

In addressing our mission we focus on the ability of democratic institutions to deliver a political system marked by public participation and inclusion, representative and accountable government, responsiveness to citizens' needs and aspirations, and the rule of law and equal rights for all citizens.

#### ***We undertake our work through three activity areas:***

**providing comparative knowledge and experience** derived from practical experience on democracy building processes from diverse contexts around the world;

**assisting political actors** in reforming democratic institutions and processes, and engaging in political processes when invited to do so; and

**influencing democracy building policies** through the provision of our comparative knowledge resources and assistance to political actors.

#### ***Our work encapsulates two key principles:***

We are exponents of democratic change. The very nature of democracy is about evolving and adapting governance systems to address the needs of an ever changing society.

We are supporters of change. The drivers of change must come from within societies themselves.

### Our programme

Democracy cannot be imported or exported, but it can be supported. And because democratic actors can be inspired by what others are doing elsewhere around the world, International IDEA plays an instrumental role in supporting their initiatives by:

#### ***Providing comparative knowledge and experience in:***

- elections and referendums
- constitutions
- political parties
- women's political empowerment
- democracy self-assessments

### ***Assisting political actors in national reform processes:***

As democratic change ultimately happens among citizens at the national and local levels we support, upon request and within our programme areas, national reform processes in countries located in:

- Latin America
- Africa and the Middle East
- Asia and the Pacific

### ***Influencing democracy building policies:***

A fundamental feature of strengthening democracy building processes is the exchange of knowledge and experience among political actors. We support such exchange through:

- dialogues
- seminars and conferences
- capacity building

### ***Seeking to develop and mainstream understanding of key issues:***

Since democratic institutions and processes operate in national and international political contexts we are developing and mainstreaming the understanding of how democracy interplays with:

- development
- conflict and security
- gender
- diversity

## **Our approach**

Democracy grows from within societies and is a dynamic and constantly evolving process; it never reaches a state of final consolidation. This is reflected in our work: in supporting our partners' efforts to make continuous advances in democratic processes we work step by step with them with a long-term perspective.

We develop synergies with those involved in driving democratic processes – regional political entities (the European Union (EU), the Organization of American States (OAS), and the African Union (AU) for example), policy makers, politicians, political parties, electoral management bodies, civil society organizations – and strategic partnerships with the key regional, international and multi/bilateral agencies supporting democratic change and different United Nations bodies.

Quintessentially, we bring experience and options to the table but do not prescribe solutions – true to the principle that the decision-makers in a democracy are the citizens and their chosen representatives.

International IDEA is an intergovernmental organization that supports sustainable democracy worldwide. International IDEA's Member States are all democracies and provide both political and financial support to the work of the institute. The Member States include Australia, Barbados, Belgium, Botswana, Canada, Cape Verde, Chile, Costa Rica, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ghana, India, Mauritius, Mexico, Namibia, the Netherlands, Norway, Peru, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and Uruguay. Japan has observer status.