



International Forum “Empowering Community of Democracies”

Seoul, 24-25 Nov. 2014

Seoul Proposal for Democracy Promotion

(Final Draft, 13 Dec. 2014)

Note:

In reporting the outcome of the International Forum on Empowering the Community of Democracies held on 24-25 Nov. 2014 in Seoul, Korea, the Seoul Proposal captures the main points of discussion and suggestions expressed in the Forum. The Forum, supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Korea was attended by approximately 45 participants, mainly Asia Democracy Network (ADN) Steering Committee members, its partners as well as representatives of democracy promotion institutions such as the Community of Democracies (CD), National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and the European Endowment for Democracy (EED).

The Forum consisted of two parts; sessions on thematic issues (24 Nov.) and sessions on institution building for democracy promotion (25 Nov.). During the thematic sessions, five priority issues of the CD were discussed, specifically freedom of opinion and expression, education for democracy, elections, enabling and protecting civil society, and transparency. During the institution-building sessions, topics on how to make the CD more effective, experiences of international institutions like the NED, EED and CD were discussed. These discussions were then taken and applied to the question of how to build a democracy promotion institution model for Asia.

The Seoul Proposal, a contribution to the agenda-setting process for the 8th CD Ministerial Conference (22-24 July, El Salvador) is composed of three parts – a proposition for i) the Governing Council of the CD¹ the Secretariat, ii) Asian governments in the CD and iii) members of the Asia Democracy Network (ADN) Steering Committee and her partners.

¹ As of 2014, The Governing Council of the Community of Democracies (CD) is currently comprised of 26 member countries: Canada, Cape Verde, Chile, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Finland, Guatemala, Hungary, India, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, Mali, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Nigeria, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, South Africa, Sweden, the United States, and Uruguay.

The Executive Committee consists of: El Salvador, Mongolia, Nigeria, Poland, Republic of Korea, Sweden, and the United States (7 countries underlined), there are 5 Asian states in the Governing Council, they are India, Japan, Mongolia, the Philippines and the Republic of Korea.

Seoul Proposal for Democracy Promotion

We, participants of the EAI-ADN International Forum “Empowering Community of Democracies,” held in Seoul on 24-25 November 2014, make the following proposals:

To the Governing Council of the CD and the Secretariat

- 1) Expand the CD from an intergovernmental process into a multi-stakeholder process with the inclusion of civil society as full participants.
- 2) Make more efforts to protect civic space and help to provide an enabling environment for the free and independent work of CSOs.
- 3) Engage more actively in the Post-2015 development agenda with a view to strengthening and mainstreaming democracy promotion, in particular the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) negotiation process.
- 4) Work more closely with regional organizations and processes not limited to the ASEAN, ASEAN+3, SAARC, East Asia Summit (EAS).
- 5) Support the creation of a multi-stakeholder democracy platform composed of governments, parliaments, democracy-related institutions such as election bodies, constitutional courts, national human rights institutions, anti-corruption agencies, democracy-related research institutes as well as civil society organizations at the national and regional level.
- 6) Explore the possibility of creating a working group or project on local democracy to strengthen democratic governance at the local level.
- 7) Support Asian governments’ efforts to create a democracy assistance foundation in the region.
- 8) Appoint ambassadors for democracy, especially among member states of the Governing Council and strengthen networking among them to promote democracy diplomacy internationally.
- 9) Allocate more Official Development Assistance (ODA) for democracy promotion and mainstreaming democracy promotion in the existing ODA program.
- 10) Strengthen the participation of parliamentary representation of both ruling and opposition parties in the CD process.
- 11) Strengthen the role and contribution of CSOs in the thematic and sectoral work of the CD.
- 12) Create an accountability mechanism such as an accountability report of members, especially member states of the Governing Council through independent monitoring bodies, including independent civil society organizations to strengthen policy coherence for democracy.

To Asian governments, in particular, Governments of Republic of Korea, Mongolia and Indonesia

- 1) Review and strengthen national legal and institutional mechanisms to protect CSOs as a watch dog and provide an enabling environment and civic space to advance democracy in Asia and beyond.
- 2) Initiate a seed fund through which established democracies in Asia can provide assistance to other countries for democracy promotion in the region.
- 3) Explore the possibility of a regional democracy assistance foundation taking into consideration the experiences of established models such as the European Endowment for Democracy (EED) and the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and the socio-political context and realities in Asia.
- 4) Work closely with the UNESCO Asia Pacific Center for Education for International Understanding (APCEIU) to promote education for democracy.
- 5) Request that the government of the Republic of Korea continue to support ADN activities financially.
- 6) Request that the government of the Republic of Korea initiate a specialized democracy foundation for international democracy assistance in Asia and beyond.
- 7) Request that the government of the Republic of Korea allocate more Official Development Assistance (ODA) for democracy promotion in Asia and beyond directly or through CSOs.
- 8) Request that the government of Mongolia continue to play a leadership role in the CD in democracy promotion in Asia through the regular meeting of ministers of foreign affairs in partnership with the ADN.
- 9) Request that the government of Mongolia make an Asia Pacific regional preparatory meeting (April, Ulaanbaatar) a multi-stake holder process in partnership with civil society organizations and other stakeholders.
- 10) Request that the government of Indonesia strengthen the Bali Democracy Forum (BDF) by linking it to the CD, making it more transparent and accountable through full participation of civil society organizations.

To the Asia Democracy Network (ADN) Members and Partners,

- 1) Engage with the CD more closely and systematically as a civil society counterpart in Asia in the process of agenda setting and implementation of CD recommendations.
- 2) Explore the possibility of initiating an Asian Charter for Human Rights and Democracy as an instrument to mobilize CSOs and democracy advocates in preparation for the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 2018.
- 3) Strengthen links with the UN Human Rights Council, especially special procedures on issues related to democracy such as human rights defenders, freedom of expression, freedom of association and assembly.
- 4) Strengthen links between the CD and the Bali Democracy Forum (BDF) through the Bali Civil Society Forum and other platforms.
- 5) Strengthen links between sub-regional advocacy platforms for democracy promotion among South Asia, Southeast Asia, Northeast Asia and Central Asia.
- 6) Initiate a regional advocacy network on transparency and accountability in partnership with the Asia Development Alliance (ADA), making use of international mechanisms such as the Open Government Partnership (OGP) in the context of the Post-2015 Development Agenda.
- 7) Strengthen democracy networking by inviting other underrepresented sectoral groups and organizations such as youth, women, migrant, minorities, indigenous peoples and vulnerable groups.
- 8) Produce an accountability report about Asian governments' performance both domestically and internationally as members of the CD, starting from the Governing Council members.
- 9) Strengthen networking among CSOs and institutions working in education for democracy, making use of the World Education Forum (WEF) to be held in Songdo, Korea on 20-22 May 2015.
- 10) Initiate a project on local democracy, making use of the 5th World Human Rights Cities Forum in Gwangju, Korea on 15-18 May 2015.

Contact Persons

- Sook-Jong LEE, President, EAI sjlee@eai.or.kr
- Anselmo LEE, Co-convener, ADN alee7080@gmail.com