

Democracy and Development
Bernard Berendsen (ed.)

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KIT Publishers – Amsterdam

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Preface

Democracy faces daunting challenges everywhere it is being pursued but especially in the approximately 100 countries that make up democracy's "Third Wave". Development has been a live topic of resolutions by the international donor community for many years, culminating in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The relationship between the two notions is a popular research topic and is heavily debated. The academic discourse swings from "Economy first, democracy later" to "No prosperity without democracy" and back.

In a path breaking lecture series organized by the Netherlands chapter of the Society for International Development (SID) in cooperation with the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD), various high-level practitioners and academics shed light on the relationship between democracy and development. This book paints a nuanced but clear portrait of this complex relationship. The various chapters reflect key factors underlying the common shortcomings of development strategies in autocracies and new democracies and how the best intentions of aid providers are often frustrated in the face of hard-to-change structural conditions.

This compilation of the lecture series *Democracy and Development* is a vital contribution to the debates on development aid. The lectures provoke policy actors to ask basic questions about what they do and prompt further questions from the many leads they have opened up.

In short, this compilation will do precisely what a first-rate lecture series should do. It represents the essence of what both SID and the NIMD seek to offer the international policy community through its work in the Netherlands and around the world.

Jos van Gennip, President of the Society of International
Development, Netherlands Chapter (SID)

&

Bernard Bot, President of the Board of the Netherlands Institute
for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD)

Introduction

Bernard Berendsen

The decision to publish the lectures of the lecture series on democracy and development that was organised by the Society for International Development and the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy in the 2006/07 season was not a minor matter. SID and NIMD are to be recommended for this initiative as it enables a much larger audience to take cognizance of and benefit from the depth and scope of the lecture series in its entirety.

The series includes contributions from politicians and activists, scientists and international civil servants, engaging in a discussion that proved to be highly relevant in a continuously changing international environment. They deal with such diverse subjects as the relationship between democracy and development, the phenomenon of fragile states in Africa, the risky introduction of democracy in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union after 1989, the effects of the rising trend of populism in Latin America, the seeming incompatibility between democracy and Islam and the role of the state as a focal point of public decision making and a centre for the application of democratic principles in a national context. The history and merits of democracy promotion were discussed extensively as well as the contribution of development cooperation to democracy promotion, assuming that democracy is required for sustainable development, and *vice versa*.

The lecture series consisted of nine lectures given at the Vrije Universiteit of Amsterdam and one at the University of Nijmegen. Added to those in this volume are a background paper to the series by Berendsen and van Beuningen that highlights the relationship between democracy and nation building, and a substantive contri-

bution by Vincent Cornell on democracy and Islam, in conjunction with Anwar Ibrahim's lecture on the same subject.

Finally, this volume contains lectures and contributions delivered at the final conference that was held on September 13, 2007, at the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs in The Hague. They include a comprehensive survey of the views on the subject by the present Minister for Development Cooperation, Bert Koenders, and a thought provoking contribution by William Easterly, linking liberalism as a precondition for economic growth to democracy as a precondition for development. Worth mentioning are the contributions by Vidar Helgesen, Secretary General of the Sweden based International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) and Lena Hjelm-Wallén, Chairman of the Board of the same institution. They form a tribute to the outstanding intellectual role of this institution in the promotion of democracy.

Although there are more ways the lectures could have been grouped together, this book has been composed in five parts. Part I deals with the relationship between democracy and development, starting with a contribution by the former Netherlands Minister for Development Cooperation, Agnes van Ardenne, for whom democracy is a right not to be denied to poor people. Like Daniel Kaufmann in the second lecture, she links democracy to good governance and the fight against corruption. Kaufmann convincingly argues that there is a two-way street between improving civil liberties and political competition on the one hand and improving corruption control on the other and both contributing to economic development.

William Easterly, the third to contribute to this part, prefers to take freedom instead of democracy as a focal point of his lecture. Starting from the presumption that we do not really know how to achieve development, the best we can do is to let people free to choose for themselves. As he says: that makes a lot of sense theoretically, and empirically he finds that democracy is associated with prosperity as well as achieving economic development at the same time.

The second part deals with the relationship between democracy, nation building and development. In a background article on the lecture series Bernard Berendsen and Cor van Beuningen point out that the connection of democracy and state with nation is becoming more troublesome while democratic procedures are being used to promote and capitalise on religious and ethnic conflict undermining the stability of nation states.

Fragile states are also at the centre of attention of Paul Colliers contribution pointing out that political instability is very much a characteristic of poor nations which is even exacerbated by the presence of an abundance of natural resources in such nations. At the political level, the present Minister for Development Cooperation, Bert Koenders, makes fragile states one of the four pillars of his new policy, recognising that in a instable environment governments are unable to perform their core duties such as to protect their citizens, to maintain public order and security, to provide basic services and maintain stabile economic conditions.

The third part of this volume deals with the subject of democracy promotion. Thomas Carothers presents a short history of democracy promotion, concluding that, by the turn of the century, democracy promotion has become discredited and the overall democracy trend has stagnated. A major factor has been the reattachment of the geo-strategic agenda with the war on terrorism taking up a prominent position.

Kim Campbell in her contribution on democracy promotion directs our attention to Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, building on experiences from the Club de Madrid, of which she was a founder and Secretary General. On their turn, Vidar Helgesen and Lena Hjelm-Wallén take a global look at the present state of democracy promotion from the viewpoint of the International Institute of Democracy and Electoral Assistance. They very much take the view that democracy must grow from within and cannot be imposed from outside. They emphasise that external interventions tend to limit the internal democratic debate on development and take precedence over it. They also would like to see a more active European stance on democracy in development

cooperation and give more explicit support to the role of regional organisations such as the African Union.

The fourth part of the volume deals with the relationship between culture and democracy and starts with a contribution by David Beetham on the structural and cultural preconditions for democracy. While being sceptical on such a precondition, he instead argues that low levels of public trust in democratic institutions are not the result of some pre-political cultural pattern but predominantly a response to their (dismal) performance.

Anwar Ibrahim on his turn deals with one particular instance of the relationship between culture and democracy which is the seeming (in)compatibility between democracy and Islam. He points at numerous examples in history and at present of democracy in Muslim societies and nations and demonstrates that there is not something inherent in Muslim societies that is not compatible with democracy. His viewpoint is supported by Vincent Cornell of Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, on the basis of a thorough analysis of sociological, theological and political texts.

Finally, the volume turns on the role of important actors in the debate on and practise of democracy and development: the state, civil society and international organisations. Starting with international organisations, Nico Schrijver makes it clear that “they do not always practise what they preach”, undermining the credibility of Western initiatives of democracy promotion. Likewise, Michael Edwards and Kumi Naidoo focus on the role of the civil society organisations. Michael Edwards attempts to broaden the concept of civil society to include a kind of society that was identified with certain ideals of the “good society”. Kumi Naidoo places the international NGOs at the heart of the debate on the social effects of globalisation. He argues that globalisation results in democratic deficits both at the national and international level. NGOs can play a role to counter such developments. Furthermore he pleads for closer links between rights and development and for NGOs to rise up to the challenge of legitimacy and the related issues of transparency and accountability.

I started to say that the Society for International Development and the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy are to be commended for the initiative to publish this book on democracy and development containing the lectures of the lecture series. But they were not the only institutions involved in the initiative. From the start the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) has supported the initiative. Its staff provided an intellectual input at the time that the series was conceived, suggesting subjects to be discussed as well as speakers to be invited. Likewise it contributed to the closing conference both ways: materially as well as in the form of lectures by its Chairman of the Board and its Director General.

Likewise the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs contributed in many different ways. It hosted workshops of speakers invited by SID for its lecture series with staff at the ministry itself, and it hosted the final conference. The ministry participated in meetings with SID and other partners to determine the subjects to be included in the lecture series and the speakers to be invited. It supported the publication of the lecture series and last but not least it contributed to the lecture series by lectures of the two Ministers for Development Cooperation of two different consecutive governments, one at the beginning of the series and one at the final conference.

The Institute of Social Studies in The Hague was one of the partners closely involved in the conception of the lecture series and during the series it remained an active partner. Several speakers were invited to speak for staff members and students of the Institute in The Hague and its staff and management were regular guests and participants at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam where the lectures were held.

Other institutions involved in the conception of the lecture series and rendering their support throughout its implementation were The Netherlands Centre for Sustainable Development (NCDO) and the Netherlands Institute for International Relations Clingendael.

Three Universities were closely associated with the lecture series: the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, the Radboud University

in Nijmegen and Maastricht University where lectures were hosted throughout the year. They were closely involved in setting the agenda, choosing subjects and speakers and hosting meetings at their institutions. It is SID's intention to extend this cooperation into the future reaching out to staff and students of these renowned institutions.

The success of such an undertaking depends not only on institutions: alter all these institutions are only structures that allow and encourage people to do their job and realise their objectives. It is these people who in the end individually and together made their contributions to and brought in their support for the realisation of the lecture series. Let me mention Ruud Treffers, Aart Jacobi, Louise Anten and Ruth Emmerink of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Roel von Meijenfelt and Marieke van Doorn of the Netherlands Institute of Multiparty Democracy; Louk de la Rive Box, Kees Biekart and Inge van Verschuer of the Institute of Social Studies; Jan Donner and Rolf Wijnstra of the Royal Tropical Institute; Malcolm Turner-Key, Andrew Ellis and Keboitse Machanga of the Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance as well as their Chairman Lena Hjelm-Wallén, Secretary-General Vidar Helgesen and Ingrid Wetterquist; Ulrich Mans of the Netherlands Institute for International Affairs, Henny Helmich of the Netherlands Centre for Sustainable Development; Ruerd Ruben, Paul Hoebink and Lau Schulpfen of Radboud University Nijmegen, Kees van Dongen of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and Chris Leonards and Huub Mudde of Maastricht University. Last but not least I would like to mention the staff of the Society for International Development and its Chairman and driving force Jos van Gennip, my co-author Cor van Beuningen, ever present support staff Wilma Bakker, Gordana Stankovic, Veronica Rivera Santander and Annette de Raadt. Without their enthusiasm and continuous effort there would have been no lecture series and without that no publication to speak of. My special thanks are for Lianne Damen who very confidently offered the services of KIT Publishers to realise the publication and succeeded throughout the process to keep up her and my good spirits.

One final word on the way the lectures were edited. In some instances the lecturers provided a written version of their lectures, including notes and references. Editing could remain limited to putting them in the right context. In other instances the lecturers were provided with a transcript of the lectures and invited to prepare a final text for publication. In some cases as editor I was given complete liberty to finalise the text. In the end I aimed for a certain conformity in format but at the same time preserving some of the flavour of the spoken word.

What has come out as a result can be seen as a varied but rather complete sample of present day thinking about the topic of democracy and development coming from different parts of the world and professionals of different background that will hopefully stimulate further thinking and debate on this subject.

PART I

Democracy and development

Development Starts at the Ballot Box

Agnes van Ardenne-van der Hoeven

Let me begin with a brief quote. “Everyone who wanted to speak did so. It was democracy in its purest form. There may have been a hierarchy of importance among the speakers, but everyone was heard. . . People spoke without interruption and the meetings lasted for many hours. The foundation of self-government was that all men were free to voice their opinions and were equal in their value as citizens.”

Many speakers in this lecture series will probably start with some reference to ancient Greece, beginning their speech where democracy supposedly began. Perhaps they will describe the Pnyx – the meeting ground of the Assembly of Athens, where all the great political struggles of the “Golden Age” took place. Where close to the Acropolis, Athenian statesmen such as Pericles and Aristides delivered their stirring speeches – and so did countless humbler citizens. However, I decided to open this series with a quote not from an Athenian statesman but from an African one: Nelson Mandela. In his autobiography “Long Walk to Freedom”, Mandela describes the tribal meetings at the “Great Place”, in the village where he grew up. The chief, who had probably never heard of Pericles, simply listened to what all the citizens had to say and only spoke at the end of the meeting – in search of a consensus. This is the type of leadership that inspired Nelson Mandela to become the first president of a democratic South Africa – after the dismantling of Apartheid. A triumph of homegrown democracy.

In a few weeks time, here in the Netherlands we will have the chance to participate in the main event of our own democracy: the

parliamentary elections. Our votes will influence the future of the nation. Our voices will be heard. There is a lot to be said about these particular elections, but that is not why I am here today. Today I wish to speak not about our own votes, our own voices, but about the voices of the poorest people on the planet. About whether their voices should be heard. In my opinion, it is high time we abandoned the misguided view that only the rich can afford or cope with democracy and that the poor are best governed with an iron fist. In fact, democracy is their best hope for peace and prosperity. The voices of the poor must be heard.

A world of democracy

The daily television images coming out of Iraq seem to hammer home the point that democracy only works in Western cultures. But it would be very unfair to put all the blame for Iraq's ordeal on the very concept of non-Western democracy. Democratisation is impossible without a tradition of democracy, it is often said. But as Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen emphasised in a recent book, the essence of democracy is "government by discussion", and traditions of public deliberation can be found in nearly all countries. For example, for several centuries, the Iranian city of Susa had an elected council, a popular assembly and magistrates who were proposed by the council and elected by the assembly. And there is no reason to assert that Arab culture or Islam is inherently incompatible with democracy. According to surveys, most Arabs and Muslims think democratic leadership is important, and according to demographic figures, half of the world's Muslims live in democratic states. And a country like India had a long and distinguished tradition of Buddhist councils, where people got together to work out their differences. The seventh-century Japanese constitution says, and I quote: "Decisions on important matters should not be made by one person alone. They should be discussed with many." Remember, this was six hundred years before the Magna Carta was signed in medieval England – an event often seen as the founding of Western democracy.

The roots of democracy can be found in a great many places around the world. Obviously, Western thinkers and politicians made a monumental contribution to the development of democracy, especially during the Enlightenment. Even so, the West cannot claim exclusive title to democratic concepts – the chief of Mandela’s village could uphold basic principles of democracy without being indebted to John Stuart Mill. Democracy is not dependent on certain cultural conditions – it is part of the human condition. While the practice of democracy differs across countries and cultures, the principles are universal.

Democracy works

Saint Augustine once prayed, “Give me chastity and continence, but not yet.” Likewise, many political scientists and economic experts say of poor countries, “Give them democracy, but not yet.” Rather than identifying culture as a permanent obstacle, prominent figures like Robert Barro and Fareed Zakaria point to underdevelopment as a temporary one. This school of thought says: development first, democracy later. In the early stages of development, the iron fist of an autocratic regime is better able to mobilise the nation’s limited financial and human resources. Democracy, they say, is a luxury that a poor country cannot afford. Big-spending politicians, special interests and the compromises of coalition governments stand in the way of firm steps towards sustainable development.

Now let’s look at the facts. First off, we must conclude that the world has seen a genuine wave of democratisation. Today, nearly seven out of ten countries are on the democratic path. This includes countries in every region of the world. In Africa, for example, practically every country is now formally a democracy and the number of countries that meet World Bank standards of good governance has tripled in the past few years. People always marvel about emerging economies, but emerging democracies are just as remarkable. For the first time in history, democracy has

reached a majority of the human race. But has democracy brought freedom at the cost of empty stomachs?

Let's look at how poor autocracies and poor democracies have fared in the past. Recent research by Daniel Kaufman has shown that the causal link runs from better governance, including political and civil liberties, to economic development and not the other way around. And according to research published by the Council on Foreign Relations, democracies have outperformed their authoritarian counterparts on the full range of development indicators. There is no evidence of an authoritarian advantage when it comes to economic growth. Democracies have a thirty per cent edge. Taking only low-income countries into account, we see that democracies are still slightly ahead. Of course, it is not just the rate of growth that matters, but also its stability, especially for the poor. When sudden, sharp dips occur, the poor have no choice but to sell what few assets they have to stay alive. Poor democracies have been much better at avoiding economic disasters. Twice as often, poor autocracies have experienced drops of ten per cent or more in annual national income. The Pinochet regime in Chile is often cited as a dictatorship that brought economic success. What most people fail to see is that under Pinochet Chile suffered two economic crises that wiped away much of the growth that had been achieved. His iron fist led the country from boom to bust.

It has long been recognised that, though growth is indispensable, there is more to development. That is why in the year 2000 world leaders agreed on a development agenda that includes a wide range of social targets in the Millennium Development Goals. Of all the countries below the poverty line, it is the democracies that are most likely to cross the finishing line by 2015. Their citizens live a decade longer. Fifty per cent fewer of their children die before their fifth birthday. Twice as many children attend secondary school. And agricultural productivity is a third higher in poor democracies.

Of course, peace is another important condition for a successful society. Countries in conflict do not prosper. Often, dictatorships are said to maintain stability by repressing tribal, ethnic or political dissent. This is incorrect. Of the forty-nine poor countries embroiled in civil conflict in the 1990s, forty-one were dictatorships. Democracies appear to be especially good at managing ethnic diversity – they use ballots instead of bullets. In dictatorships, ethnic diversity reduces growth by up to three percentage points, while it has no adverse effects on economic growth in democracies. A democratic deficit contributed to many cases of state failure in the second half of the twentieth century. And there is a powerful pattern of “democratic peace” – democracies rarely go to war with each other.

Exceptions to the rule

Critics of this democratic peace theory, first put forward by Kant, often refer to exceptional cases where democracies did wage war on one another. One example is the 1999 Kargil War between India and Pakistan, which was then democratic, over the Kashmir issue – the first ground war between the two countries after they developed nuclear weapons. Or last summer’s war between Israel and Lebanon. Whatever we conclude about these specific cases, most proponents of the democratic peace theory don’t claim that democratic states are always at peace with one another. They merely say that the probability of war is very low, a prediction which is definitely borne out by the facts.

And this makes perfectly good sense. In democracies, a moderate majority will normally stop overzealous politicians from wasting money and lives on war. The majority generally prefers peaceful resolution of international conflicts – the same method used to settle conflicts at home. Democracies, both rich and poor, maintain stability by allowing people and countries to work out their differences with words instead of weapons.

Democracy's superior track record in the field of development also makes good sense. In functioning democracies, politicians are more likely to pursue the national interest instead of their own interests, because they know they will be held accountable at the next election. The free flow of information and the openness of public debate improve the quality of policy analysis, lay the groundwork for innovation and reduce the risk of corruption. Still, critics contest democracy's development success by coming up with counterexamples. Such as China, a one-party state with double digit growth. Similarly, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan and Vietnam have all achieved high growth rates without the blessings of democracy. But just as with the democratic peace theory, what matters for policy is the rule, not the exception. And these are exceptions: over the last two decades, seven times as many dictatorships had poor growth rather than good growth, with several autocratic failures even in East Asia. The economic success of some East Asian countries, caused not by an iron fist but by the invisible hand of market forces, merely shows that democracy is not always a necessary condition for development. But the theory that democracy is more likely to promote development than autocracy still stands.

Democracy is right

The case for democracy is not just built on its superior track record of promoting peace and prosperity. It is also built on a foundation of moral values. The freedom to have a say in hiring and firing your government is a human right. That makes democracy not just a means to an end, but also an end in itself. This point is often missed in today's lengthy discussions on whether spreading democracy is a sensible strategy for fighting terrorism. Democracy is really much more than a strategy, it is a goal. The UN Charter does not mention the word democracy, but the democratic tradition does inform its opening words: "We the peoples of the United Nations". This expresses the view that both the sovereignty of the member states and the legitimacy of the world body are rooted in the popular will. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is

more explicit, and I quote: “The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government.” The declaration also outlines the other rights that are necessary to guarantee, in the words of Abraham Lincoln, “a government of the people, by the people and for the people.”

Encouraging homegrown democracy

So encouraging democracy in poor countries is not just a sound development policy, it is also the right thing to do. That is why I have led the way from a technocratic approach to development cooperation to a development policy that embraces the political dimension. A development policy that embraces democracy. Public debate centres on whether it is feasible to impose democracy from the outside. But as Amartya Sen has noted, this is the wrong question. The roots of democracy can be found everywhere: in the North, South, East and West. The real question is therefore how to support homegrown democracy effectively. How to make sure every country’s Nelson Mandela gets a chance.

The most straightforward approach is to make sure that elections are held in the first place and that they are free and fair. And that is what we are working on. For example, we supported elections last year in Burundi and this year in Congo. We financed both the hardware and the software of Congolese democracy. That is, we paid for the ballot boxes for the presidential elections, which culminated yesterday in the second-round run-off between Joseph Kabila and Jean-Pierre Bemba. But we also educated personnel at voting stations and trained the police to provide crucial election-day security – backed up by an EU military force in which we also participated. With our support, a coalition of religious organisations close to the people told voters how to vote – but not what to vote! And we helped a human rights NGO in East Congo monitor whether independent and minority candidates got a fair chance. So that the people of the Democratic Republic of Congo can help their country live up to its name.

Building a stable and sustainable democracy is a tremendous task, going far beyond holding elections. Upholding freedom of speech and expression is especially vital – before people can govern themselves, they must be able to express themselves. That is why in several poor countries I am encouraging the emergence of a strong and independent press, willing and able to confront the government with a high level of scrutiny. In Yemen, we are training independent journalists. And in Kenya, where newspapers have done much to expose corruption, we support legislative reforms that enhance transparency, like the Freedom of Information Act. But freedom of speech and expression is not just about laws and institutions – in equal measure, it is about culture. A culture of tolerance is the breathing space needed for public debate, for “government by discussion”, which is the essence of democracy. A society where minorities of any kind are not free, or do not feel free, to voice their opinions is not a democracy – it is oppression by the elite. A true democracy understands that uniformity is weakness and diversity is power. It is a learning organisation, where dissenting opinions and diverse views are recognised as essential for engendering human dignity and indispensable for improving policy.

Freedom of expression is an especially problematic issue in the Middle East – in the one region still relatively untouched by the democratisation. The Arab Human Development Reports speak of a freedom deficit. These are homegrown studies, written by Arab scholars who wonder what went wrong. Obviously, all is not well with freedom of expression in the Arab world: for example, there are almost no worthwhile think-tanks in the region. Some authors assert that religion is to blame, with its emphasis on finding the truth in scripture, rather than reflection and experience. Through the Knowledge Forum on Religion and Development Policy, I am analysing the role of religion in promoting or discouraging diversity and dissent, both inside and outside the Arab world. While some forms of Islamic teaching might hold back independent thought, it never stopped the great Arab astronomers and mathematicians of the Middle Ages. There are no straightforward

answers here, but the Knowledge Forum offers an opportunity for careful analysis and tailored measures, for example by our embassies. One high priority is to energise public debate in closed societies, on both religious diversity and diversity in general. The Forum was established last year when the SID held its lecture series on religion and development. It takes the form of a partnership between the Dutch government and Dutch civil society.

A democratic society without a vital civil society is an empty shell, as I am sure everyone here would agree. Strengthening civil society is crucial since it represents the demand side of the political equation. Civil society organisations such as voluntary associations, educational institutions, clubs, unions, charities and churches can amplify the voices and voice the demands of the most silent, invisible and impoverished citizens. They also foster many elements essential to democracy, such as participation and accountability. Obviously, the job of helping to build civil society is best left to civil society, not governments. For this purpose, I have just pledged a total of over two billion euros to Dutch civil-society organisations for the next four years. Our new grant system puts a premium on quality, cooperation, complementarity and a results-based approach. It also puts the “civil” back into civil society organisations – they are now required to get at least twenty-five per cent of their funds from other sources. They will work side by side with intermediate institutions in the South, which have been the “missing middle” in many developing countries.

As our civil society works on the demand side of the political equation, I am also working on the supply side. This means engaging in honest and open political dialogue with poor-country governments on the state of their democracies. It also means working with them to make sure the state can live up to the expectations and demands of the governed. Many citizens judge their government by its ability to provide basic services such as security, health and education. If democratic governments in poor countries fail to do so, that could in time destroy public backing for democracy. But like democracy itself, state capacity for delivering public services

must be homegrown – it's no use sending in our own people or imposing our own organisational models. Fortunately, last year the donor community rallied around the Paris Declaration, which states that the only way to improve a country's systems is by working with them. The Netherlands not only played a major role in forging this consensus, but also started implementing its principles years ago by channelling our funding through the national budgets of the recipient countries. And we run public finance management programmes that teach civil servants in those countries how to manage those national budgets properly. Of course, it takes not just good civil servants but responsive and responsible politicians as well. I also promote that cause through the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy – a joint initiative of political parties for political parties. According to recent research by the OECD, our early application of the Paris Principles has led to progress – in the form of an expansion of basic services in health and education.

International organisations such as the OECD measure aid effectiveness. At the national level, developing countries need their own public institutions to measure development results and monitor whether the government is playing by the rules. A democracy needs all the watchdogs it can get. That is why the Netherlands has supported independent audit offices in 22 countries in Africa. And through a wide array of projects we promote the rule of law. This ranges from improving legal education in Mali to providing legal aid to employees in China; and from educating journalists in Egypt about their legal rights to assisting in the reform of criminal law in Georgia. Without the rule of law there can be no rule by the people, of the people or for the people. Alongside the judiciary, parliamentarians are important watchdogs – I speak from experience, having served as a member of parliament for eight years. As a minister I strengthen parliaments all around the world, for instance with courses on lawmaking in Benin and on economic governance in Georgia. Any government with enough power to protect its citizens must be counterbalanced by a powerful parliament and a vibrant civil society.

Conclusion. Long walk to freedom

Throughout my lecture, I have emphasised that working on democracy means working with civil society. I have always enjoyed working with you and hope our good relationship will continue. The SID is not just a Society for International Development, but also a Society for International Democracy. For instance, we support your efforts in East Africa to foster dialogue between politicians, policymakers, researchers and NGOs.

Your new lecture series is another excellent initiative, and I was pleased to start it off with the words of a great African statesman. Nelson Mandela managed to breathe life into democratic principles rooted in his own culture – to realise his African dream. But, as the title of his autobiography says, it's a long walk to freedom. And in terms of political freedom, the African continent still has a long way to go. We do have every reason to be optimistic – look at NEPAD, where African countries assess each other's performance in the area of governance. I don't see that happening in the European Union! Democracy is on the march and that is good news for the poor. Along with free markets, democracy is one of human society's greatest inventions, and why should the poor be denied its fruits? Democracy has provided the best answer to the central question of politics, as expressed in the old Latin saying: "Who will watch the watchers?" Democracy's answer is simple: each and every one of us.

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