

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ ISSUED AT THE END OF THE CONFERENCE OF POLITICAL PARTIES DURING THE PARTNERSHIP DAYS FROM 10 SEPTEMBER 2007 TO 13 SEPTEMBER 2007

1. At the invitation of the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) the leadership of political parties and co-ordinating institutions from 17 countries from Eurasia, Africa, Latin America and The Netherlands participated in a conference of political parties from 10 September - 13 September 2007.
2. The opening session was addressed by the Vice President of the board of NIMD Mr. J.J.A.M. van Gennip. He reiterated an NIMD commitment to the strengthening and consolidation of democracy through the workings of political parties in partner countries.
3. The conference shared the experiences, achievements, and developments with regard to NIMD and programmes in each of the 17 countries. Participants exchanged best practices, challenges, experiences and lessons learned, related to the institutionalisation of political parties as key pillars of multiparty democracy and inter party dialogue platforms.
4. The Partnership Days programme commenced with highlighting and discussing the strategic choices in NIMD's multi-annual plan and taking stock of the main challenges in it's programmes.
5. The conference resolved that there should be continued support of political parties based on the principals of ownership and performance-based partnership with strict criteria for judging the quality of proposals and the accountability of funds.

Examples of performance-based results already achieved included the constitutional reform processes that were underway; the institutionalisation of Centres for Multiparty Democracy; and the construction of democracy schools;

6. Contemplating the key challenges ahead, the conference identified the following:
 - Mainstreaming of the political reform agenda in the partner countries;
 - Securing external funding from sources other than NIMD – strategic partnerships with sister organisations;
 - Deepening the knowledge base both of NIMD and its partners in order to ensure that the knowledge generated through the implementation and experiences of the programme are not lost but can be used to instruct the programme going forward;
 - Institutionalisation of the CMDs in partner countries where these have not already been institutionalised.
 - Up-streaming democracy support to enhance global democracy – spreading the programme to new partner countries;
7. The conference resolved that a new priority area would be a focus on fragile states such as Burundi and Zimbabwe.
8. Despite being at different levels of development, each of the country programs faced common challenges. These include the reform of national constitutions and electoral systems; building trust between and among political parties; increasing the funding base so that the programmes can be adequately implemented and expanded; establishing CMDs in countries where these do not exist; continuously establishing and confirming the *bona fides* of NIMD among participating political parties; and supporting participating political parties.
9. The conference noted the establishment of a Knowledge Centre at NIMD headquarters, which would document institutional memory, including best practice and lessons learned, in order to facilitate the sharing of experiential knowledge and know-how.
10. A report was tabled on the results of a survey on internal-party democracy. Despite a limited number of political parties responding to the survey, the conference noted with appreciation the relevance of this exercise and the importance of some of its findings. It was noted that while political parties have established formal systems aimed at ensuring internal governance and democracy, the gap between written policy and its implementation remains a challenge for most parties.

11. An examination of some practical examples of internal-party democracy from representatives from Dutch, Georgian, and Ghanaian parties, noted that different political parties had different structures and processes for ensuring internal-party democracy. Of particular interest was the way in which Dutch parties, to varying degrees, provided for the direct participation of their members in electing the party office bearers. The financing of candidates to campaign for the position, also received attention. The use of technology, notably the internet and telephones, was also of interest, but it was noted that this approach was likely to have limited application outside of Europe, given the limited access to technology.
12. The conference reviewed the Partnership Charter that had been drafted and adopted at the 2005 partnership days. Generally, participants agreed that the Partnership Charter provided an adequate enabling framework within which the partnership could function. However, several suggestions were made for the amendment of the Charter as follows:
 - The charter should be viewed as a “Bill of Rights and Obligations” for the purposes of the partnership between NIMD and its partners and should be based on the rights and obligations of the partners as contained in the Charter.
 - In the spirit of the Charter, NIMD should be sensitive to varying political contexts and circumstances that may impact the pace and timing of reforms in the partner countries; they should not attempt to force this pace despite these circumstances.
 - The Charter should be amended to take account of the possibility of other strategic partners joining the partnership;
 - The notion of partnership should be expanded to include accumulation of knowledge, skill and resources and an exchange in the form of mutual learning.
13. The conference resolved that opportunities should be created, whether via the Knowledge Centre or special conferences or country to country visits, to capitalise on the opportunities to have comparative learning experiences between the regions rather than just between countries in each region.
14. The conference examined a proposed generic Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between NIMD and partner CMDs. Although the broad thrust of the MOU was accepted, the conference resolved that a range of issues would have to be re-examined and the proposed MOU resubmitted to delegates for approval once these concerns had been addressed and the MOU appropriately amended.