

## WASHINGTON DECLARATION

### Teleconference Between the US Congress and the European Parliament

*Frontiers of Democracy: Challenges in Eastern Europe and the Americas*

Parliamentary Forum Meeting, 15 September 2010, Washington

We, the participants in the Parliamentary Forum of the Community of Democracies meeting in Washington on the occasion of the *International Day of Democracy*,

**recognizing that** the International Day of Democracy serves as a reminder that *people everywhere should have the right to determine their own political, economic, social, and cultural systems;*

**taking note that** the Community of Democracies Parliamentary Forum is a coalition of like-minded democratically elected parliamentarians and former senior parliamentarians who are determined to work together to strengthen democracy where it is weak and invigorate where it is longstanding;

**emphasizing that** democracy encompasses full civic participation in all aspects of life, human rights (including for women and children), freedom of expression, independent media, accountability, transparency, access to education, rule of law, and other universal values and principles set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Agenda for Democratization, submitted by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the 51st session of the UN General Assembly, the Warsaw Declaration of the Community of Democracies and other relevant instruments of international law;

**recalling** recent resolutions: Vilnius Declaration setting up the Community of Democracies Parliamentary Forum (March 10-11, 2010), Resolution on the nomination of Liu Xiaobo for the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize (March 12, 2010), Resolution on the situation in Georgia (March 12, 2010), Resolution calling for support of Cuba's pro-democracy movement (March 12, 2010), Final resolution of Parliamentary Forum Krakow meeting (July 3, 2010), Resolution calling for improvement of the political and civil society situation in Belarus (July 3, 2010), Resolution calling for improvement of the political situation in Ukraine (July 3, 2010), and Resolution calling for support of Cuba's pro-democracy movement (July 3, 2010);

**understanding** the importance of strong international cooperation in promoting and fostering democracy across the world;

**appealing** to all democratic governments and parliaments to pursue peaceful measures to promote, foster, and protect democracy worldwide and to include the democracy dimension as a permanent component of their foreign policy;

**acknowledging** a “democracy recession” and the significant number of new authoritarian regimes and “backsliding” governments which would restrict civil society space;

**urging** governments and parliaments to support democratic opposition movements and human rights activists struggling for democracy and human rights in countries under totalitarian and authoritarian regimes;

**encouraging** governments and parliaments to address economic and social problems, such as poverty reduction and income inequality, that can undermine new democracies and tarnish the concept of democracy;

**underscoring** that the modernisation of countries of strategic international importance with their political systems governed by a top-down approach should involve not only economic liberalisation, but also structural political reforms, implementation of the rule of law, and development of civil society;

**taking note** that the open door policy of the European Union is crucial for a new wave of democratisation because the prospect of EU membership, for example, is an effective way to promote reforms in neighbouring countries;

**realizing** the need to bolster the parliamentary dimension of the Community of Democracies;

**noting** the leading role in strengthening and promoting the effectiveness of parliamentary democracy to be played by the Community of Democracies ;

**welcoming** the establishment, during the Democracy Days in Vilnius on 23 June 2010, of the Young Leaders Forum as an official pillar within the Community of Democracies for ensuring youth representation at every level of the Community of Democracies, including ministerial and working group meetings;

***hereby agree to***

*establish* the Secretariat of the Parliamentary Forum of the Community of Democracies in Vilnius, to guide and facilitate the activities of the Parliamentary Forum in accord with the same principles that led to the creation of the Community of Democracies itself in 2000 and those set forth in the Vilnius Declaration of 2010. The Secretariat will be committed to strengthening the effectiveness of the Community of Democracies in promoting and supporting democracy. It will also provide multidimensional support to the leadership and members of the Parliamentary Forum especially in providing assistance to parliamentarians in new democracies and democracies facing threats to their survival.