

**Remarks of Deputy Secretary of State John D. Negroponte
At the Community of Democracies Ministerial, Inaugural Session
Thursday, November 15, 2007
Bamako, Mali**

Thank you. I am pleased to be here in Mali today. Thank you for letting me be part of the dialogue at this gathering of democracies. I want to thank President Amadou Toumani Toure [**AH-MAH-DOO TOO-MAH-NEE TOO-RAY**] and Minister Ouane [**WHAN**], and the government and people of Mali, for hosting this Ministerial meeting. We congratulate Mali for its successful leadership of the Community of Democracies. We appreciate all of your hard work.

Mali has led our global democracy partnership during exciting times for democracy worldwide. In roughly the past 25 years, the number of democracies in our world has nearly tripled. People of every race, every religion, and every region of the world are now realizing their aspirations for democracy and the rule of law. Where it is blocked we see conflict, violence and impoverishment. Here in Africa a democratic awakening has helped put an end to decade long conflict in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Angola and Mozambique. And we continue our peacekeeping efforts in Sudan and Somalia on the presumption that increased security will help pave the way for democratic elections.

We have come to Mali to seek to protect and promote, what President Bush calls, the non-negotiable demands of human dignity. Our policy is based on the belief that all human beings are born free, equal in dignity, and possessing basic human rights. Advancing these principles is not only morally right; it is a strategic and practical interest for us all. Every nation will find the particular form of democracy that works best for its people but there are some necessary requirements – freedom of expression and assembly, an inclusive social dialogue, effective checks and balances, respect for the rule of law.

In our support of democracy, we are mindful of the difficulties. There are no short cuts. I was just in Cote d'Ivoire, where once warring factions have agreed to a road map that, if implemented, will return their country to democracy. In Burkina Faso I spoke with President Blasé Campoare [**KAM PA ORE**], the author of those peace accords, about how the international community can work together to encourage President Gbagbo [**BAHG BO**] to move quickly on implementation. I was also in Nigeria where flawed elections drew international condemnation and raised legitimate questions about the incoming government. Still, I departed Abuja encouraged by President Yar Adua's respect for the rule of law and for the results of an independent electoral commission. He has, so far, been faithful to his public commitment to support good governance and transparency.

In both Nigeria and Cote D'Ivoire I spoke with representatives of a vibrant civil society and a free press. They spoke to me of people's frustration with violence and corruption; and of their desire for good governance and prosperity. Like all nations, Nigeria and Cote d'Ivoire have made missteps on their democratic journeys, but their journeys continue as the leaders of both

countries acknowledge the need for reform. We must help them and support them and I look forward to the future when we can welcome them to this community of democracy.

We must also help those countries where elections threaten to be a mere tool for accumulating power. Where leaders have sought to use their mandate from the voters to eliminate checks and undermine democratic institutions. Democracy is rule by laws and institutions not by individuals. It does not concentrate power in one person or office. It does not shut down the press and use guns to overwhelm its opponents. It does not shut down NGO's and civil society. We must remind those who are elected democratically that they have a responsibility, to their people and to the international community, to govern democratically. And if they do not, then responsible democracies everywhere must hold them accountable.

We are making progress in using this Community as a platform for promoting democratic values and best practices. The democracy bridge has helped create a link between the Organization of American States and the African Union to compare lessons learned and to borrow from the success of the Inter-American Democratic Charter and the African Union's New Partnership for African Development. We are close to finalizing a guidebook on techniques and initiatives to promote democracy. The United States is hopeful that we can continue to make progress on a democratic caucus at the UN that could provide strong support on human rights and other issues that are part of our democratic agenda.

The United States has also taken some bilateral actions that would reinforce the Community. Secretary of State Rice announced last December a set of NGO principles reflecting our support for active and independent civil society. We also support the United Nations Democracy Fund in its efforts to support civil society and will contribute eight million dollars next year to this important initiative. Earlier today I met with NGO representatives from several non-democratic states to express our support for their courageous efforts. Together with our friends we have also initiated a regional effort, the Asia Pacific Democracy Working Group, seeking to help promote democratic promotion efforts in the Asia region. I participated in the initial organizing meeting today.

Finally, the United States is supporting democratic development through our Millennium Challenge Account initiative. We are channeling our foreign assistance to responsible leaders who govern justly, advance economic freedom, and invest in their people. Ambassador Danilovich will speak about this in more detail in just a moment.

And we will continue to speak out where there has been little or no progress in establishing democracy. In Burma, the entire world has been shocked by the ongoing repression of peaceful monks and demonstrators. Burma's leaders reject the will of their people to live in freedom and elect their own leaders, and we need to continue speaking as one international community, and especially as one democratic community, for the peaceful aspirations of the Burmese people.

We must do so in Cuba as well, where the regime has never delivered on its promises of economic prosperity, individual liberty, and human rights. I recently met with dissidents from

Cuba. I told them that a change is coming, and that when it does, the international community must stand with the people of Cuba, and support their right to chart their own course in freedom.

In Zimbabwe, the government is desperately clinging to power, even as it drives the economy into the ground. The regime has turned to violence to repress any and all peaceful dissent. It is blatantly abusing human rights as trampling fundamental freedoms. Nigerian President Yar'Adua recently spoke the truth about the Zimbabwean regime's disregard for the rule of law, and I applaud his honesty.

Ladies and Gentlemen: never before have we been so unified in charting a course of better opportunity for all men, women and children of the world. The whole world stands to benefit from the stability that will come from a future of development and democracy. I thank each and every one here today for your commitment to freedom.