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STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL INTERNATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE COMMUNITY OF DEMOCRACIES (ISC/CD) ON EVENTS IN TUNISIA January 28, 2011

All members of the non-governmental International Steering Committee of the Community of Democracies (ISC/CD) have watched with hope and trepidation as recent events have led to a dramatic change of government in Tunisia. We feel hope, as the people of Tunisia have made clear their deep-seated desire for democracy and their willingness to confront authority in their efforts to install democracy in their country. But we also realize, as we learned time and again, that authoritarian leaders in the Middle East and North Africa (as elsewhere) will not hesitate to use all means to protect their positions of power. Hence, the people of Tunisia deserve the support of the Community of Democracies, whenever requested, during this complex transitional period.

The ISC/CD adheres strongly to the principles reflected in the Conclusions and Recommendations of the October 2007 Conference in Budapest on “**Prospects for Democratic Transition in the Middle East and North Africa**,” organized by the Council for a Community of Democracies, in which many ISC/CD members participated. We call on all supporters of democracy, all partners in and with the region, to adopt and adhere to these principles. We look forward to working with all such partners to assist the democratic transition -- in Tunisia and elsewhere. (The full report and conclusions of the Conference can be found [online here](#).)

In particular, the ISC/CD offers the following recommendations to Tunisians and to the International Community:

For Tunisians:

- All advocates for democracy should make a clear, public pledge to pursue their goals through non-violent means. A Code of Conduct should be adopted to this end.
- Democratic activists must develop channels to build a dialogue with authorities on their inclusion in the new democratic order. The interim government should meet with representatives of all Tunisian organizations to ensure that democratic measures are taken to ensure stability in the country.
- Measures should be taken to ensure that the Tunisian Constitution will be reviewed to reflect the democratic principles contained within the CD’s [Warsaw Declaration](#) and generally accepted principles of rule of law. This should be accompanied by the unconditional release of all political prisoners,

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un-banning of all persons or organizations that were restricted by the previous regime, and cessation of all political trials.

- Respect for freedom of association and of expression by the police and security apparatus as people form and join organizations of their choice in pursuance of their peaceful democratic objectives.
- Assistance to the development of strong institutions in a vibrant, mobilized civil and political society, with internalized democratic standards and the involvement of youth at all stages of the process.
- Free, fair and transparent elections organized under independent electoral management and internationally monitored, without which democracy cannot exist, must be a primary goal shared by all parties interested in democratic change. Civil society should be encouraged to play an active role in local politics, where it can make its greatest impact.
- Independent media voices are an essential requirement for democratic transitions. The national dialogue about democracy is considerably enhanced in an age of globalization, notably through open access to ideas circulating around the world on the Internet.
- The parties should meet and agree for a role to be played by the international community in the transitional process.

For the International Community:

- The ISC/CD calls on the governments of the CD, and particularly the Convening Group with the support of the Permanent Secretariat in Warsaw, to offer assistance to the government of Tunisia in its transition to democracy. The CD should enter into discussions with the people and government of Tunisia to identify how to support and encourage the democratic process there.
- International advocates of democracy should encourage their governments to take a more pro-active position in support of democracy in the Middle East and North Africa.
- Efforts must be continued to create an appreciation of the vital need for genuine, productive partnership agreements with the Arab world that support democratic development in the region.
- It must be understood that democratic change is primarily a domestic initiative that can at best only be *assisted* by external forces. Financial support for democratic transition is the *least* important aspect of support coming from the international community.

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- Activities by the international community should always maintain a focus on supporting the citizens of the country, as it is they who must be the initiators of democratic change. Resources and experience should be brought to bear to assist local efforts to bring democracy to countries of the region.
- The international community of democracies should make clear its willingness to accept and work with religion-based parties, provided they adhere to democratic principles before, during and after elections.
- Provide support for the creation of an independent and impartial national truth and reconciliation commission with the full mandate to uncover and investigate alleged violations of national and international law.
- Offer United Nations technical assistance to ensure the holding of free and fair elections under independent electoral management, and support international observation when those elections are held.