The Centre for Democratic Institutions

THREE CONFERENCES IN NOVEMBER - BANGKOK, SEOUL, TOKYO

Roland Rich, Director of CDI, attended three important conferences in November in Bangkok, Seoul and Tokyo. All three were concerned with different aspects of the process of consolidating democracy in the world. In Bangkok, Congress IV of King Prajadhipok’s Institute reviewed the strengths and weaknesses of the 1997 Constitution. In Seoul, the Community of Democracies Non-Governmental Forum examined issues of propagating the values of democracy internationally. And in Tokyo, a workshop sponsored by the Diet debated the place of Japan in democracy promotion.

Bangkok - KPI Congress IV on Five Years of Political Reform under the New Constitution, 8-10 November 2002

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2540, the 16th constitution of Thailand, which was promulgated on 11 October 1997, aims primarily at political reform. It emphasizes promoting and protecting the rights and liberties of the people, increasing public participation in the administration and oversight of the exercise of state powers, as well as improving the stability and effectiveness of the political structure.

After more than four years of implementation of the Constitution, it seemed expedient to monitor and assess its effects – whether and how its implementation has been a success or a failure, whether enforcement has been consistent with the spirit of the Constitution, and what are the Constitution’s strengths and weaknesses. The interim provisions of the Constitution, in Section 336, provide that after five years elapse from the promulgation of the Constitution, the Election Commission, the Constitutional Court or the National Counter Corruption Commission shall have the power to submit to the National Assembly or the Council of Ministers a report presenting opinions on the amendment of the Constitution.

King Prajadhipok’s Institute (http://www.kpi.ac.th/en/index.asp), an academic institution under the supervision of the President of the National Assembly, with which CDI has a close working relationship governed by an MOU (http://www.cdi.anu.edu.au/activities/MOU_KPI_Sept2000.htm), is conscious of the importance of political reform under the Constitution and therefore has arranged for the research, monitoring, and assessment of its effects. Results of the studies on the Constitution and activities of various independent organizations were presented to the public at the KPI Congress IV, entitled “Five Years of Political Reform Under the New Constitution” on 8-10 November 2002 at the United Nations Conference Center.
The Congress brought together leading political, judicial, academic and community figures from Thailand to examine the way the institutions under the 1997 Constitution have functioned. While problems were identified with various aspects of the implementation of the Constitution, there was a general view that the construction of the institutions under the Constitution needed more time. A wide range of amendments at this stage might confuse the process of implementation. Nevertheless, the need for continued critical examination of the implementation of the Constitution was of paramount importance.

Seoul - The Community of Democracies Non-Governmental Forum, 10-12 November

The Community of Democracies Non-Governmental Forum is a common initiative of independent groups to strengthen international collaboration in the promotion of democracy and to make recommendations to the governmental assembly of the Community of Democracies. The Non-Governmental Forum is a periodic gathering of democracy activists, practitioners, supporters and experts who convene in conjunction with and parallel to the Community of Democracies in order to provide it with practical ideas to assist it in strengthening democratic principles and practices around the world. The Community of Democracies and the Forum met in Seoul, Korea from 10-12 November, 2002.

The Non-Governmental Forum of the Community of Democracies convened under the theme “Global Solidarity for Expanding and Strengthening Democracy.” The objective was to identify, discuss, and find a consensus on the most challenging issues that pose a threat to democracy around the world. On the basis of its findings the Forum made recommendations for action to the governmental assembly.

Workshops: The Non-Governmental Forum discussed the major challenges to democracy and strategies to meet those challenges in seven Regional and eight Topical Workshops.

Regional Workshops:
- Europe/Russia
- Central Asia and the Caucasus
- East Asia
- South Asia
- Middle East
- Sub-Sahara Africa
- Americas

Topical Workshops:
- Strengthening Political Party System
- Market and Democratic Governance
- Corruption and Democracy
- Education for Democracy/Civic Education
- Democracy, Freedom of Association, and the Protection of NGOs
- Local Government and Democracy
- Creating Civil Society in Closed Societies
- Media and Democracy
A full program can be found on the Forum website: [http://www.cdngf2002.org/02_program.html](http://www.cdngf2002.org/02_program.html)


The Washington Post of 20 November commented favourably on the Seoul conference and the Community of Democracies initiative but pointed out that it was not getting the attention it deserved, including in Washington where the initiative originated in the Clinton/Albright years. [http://www.iht.com/articles/77471.htm](http://www.iht.com/articles/77471.htm)

**Tokyo - Diet Committee to Aid Democracy for Peace Building, 13-14 November**

The workshop held in the Parliamentary Museum Conference Room had the title of 'Enlightened post Cold War initiative for Peace Building and Democracy - Enhancing the Role of the Parliament and NGOs.’ The conference was hosted by three organizations, the Ozaki Yukio Memorial Foundation, the Committee for Aiding Democracy for Peace-building (ADP Committee), and the Diet Members’ League Supporting ADP Initiative. The National Endowment for Democracy sponsored the conference. The workshop program included a host of speakers from Japan and abroad.

The theme behind the workshop was the wish of Diet members and the NGO community to be more involved in the delivery of Japanese cooperation assistance in support of democracy and peace building. The impetus for the workshop came from a group of current and former Diet members including Tsutomu Hata, former Prime Minister, Kazuo Tanikawa, former Minister of Justice, Hisaoki Kamei, Eisei Ito, Yukihisa Fujita and Taro Kono. They were supported by members of the NGO community who had worked in Cambodia, East Timor and Afghanistan.

At the conclusion of the workshop strong support for the initiative was provided by Tamisuke Watanuki, Speaker of the House of Representative and Hiroyuki Kurata, President of the House of Councillors. A possible outcome of the workshop may be to strengthen the role of the Ozaki Yukio Memorial Foundation. Yukio Ozaki was active as a member of the Japanese Diet for more than 60 years during critical decades of Japanese modernization. He argued for the strengthening of Japanese democracy. His ideals included espousal of parliamentary democracy, support for a form of world federalism and the need to search for ways of achieving international peace. The workshop was honoured to have his daughter, Mrs. Sohma Yukika, participate in the workshop. It might be possible to broaden the goals of the Foundation to include democracy promotion efforts abroad.

**Program**  
**November 13-14, 2002**

**Day One**  
2:30 – 3:00pm Welcoming remarks/Introductory address  
- Mayumi Moriyama, Chair of the Board, Ozaki Yukio Memorial Foundation, Japan
• Carl Gershman, President, National Endowment for Democracy, USA

3:00 – 4:30am Promoting Democratic Governance and Market Reform
• Kenji Isezaki, Professor, Rikkyo University, Japan
• John Sullivan, Center for International Private Enterprise, USA
• Melinda Quintos de Jesus, Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility, the Philippines

4:30 – 5:30pm Democracy Assistance Foundations: the Experiences of Other Countries
• David Lowe, National Endowment for Democracy, USA
• Roland Rich, Centre for Democratic Institutions, Australia
• Uwe Optenhoegel, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Germany
• Röel von Meijenfeldt, Institute for Multi-Party Democracy, The Netherlands
• Izumi Nakamitsu Lennartsson, International IDEA, Sweden
• Axel Queval, Jean-Jaures Foundation, France
• Kenneth Wollack, National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, USA

6:00 – 7:30pm Dinner
• Ambassador Yukio Sato, former Ambassador to the United Nations
• Yoriko Kawaguchi, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Japan

Day Two
9:30 – 10:45pm Promoting Freedom of Information and Use of New Communication Technologies
• Eiichiro Ishiyama, Asia Press Club, Japan
• Worldview International, Norway
• Steven Gan, Malaysiakini, Malaysia

10:45 – 12:00pm The Role of NGOs in Peace-building and Democracy Promotion Abroad
• Michiya Kumaoka, Japan International Volunteer Center
• Nobuhiko Sudou, Inter-band
• Toshimitsu Shigemura, Takushoku University
• Akihisa Matsuno, Osaka University for Foreign Studies

12:30 – 1:30 pm Lunch

2:00 – 4:00 pm Public Symposium: An Exchange Between Diet Members and Representatives of Democracy Assistance Foundations on Peace-building and Democracy Promotion Abroad

4:00 – 5:30 pm Public Symposium: Panel Discussion on the Role of the Diet in Peace-building and Democracy Promotion Abroad
• Carl Gershman, National Endowment for Democracy, USA
• Representatives of the Diet League for Supporting the Committee for Aiding Democracy Promotion

6:00 – 7:30 pm Reception
• Yuriko Takeyama, Liberal Party (Chair)
• Nancy Kassebaum Baker, former U.S. Senator, USA
• Yukika Sohma, Ozaki Yukio Memorial Foundation
• Kazuo Tanikawa, Liberal Democrat Party