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March-April 2004

## Highlights

- **'Democracy in the Arab World'**

A meeting was held in The Hague, Netherlands, on 25–26 March 2004 to examine the challenges to, and the prospects for, democratization in the Arab world. Hosted by the Dutch government, in its capacity as Chair of the Council of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), the meeting also sought to situate the work of IDEA and other programmes to support democracy in the region, as well as to gain insight on how best to strengthen cooperation in future. Read more ([http://www.idea.int/newsletters/2004/Mar-Apr04/arab\\_world.htm](http://www.idea.int/newsletters/2004/Mar-Apr04/arab_world.htm))

- **MPs of the World talk Reconciliation**

Reconciliation was chosen as the main theme of the 110th Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). The gathering, in Mexico City, Mexico, on 15–23 April 2004, brought together some 1,000 parliamentarians from all corners of the world. IDEA provided participants with a policy briefing entitled 'Reconciliation in Times of Transition: The Role of Parliaments and Inter-Parliamentary Bodies' as well as the summary version of the IDEA Handbook Reconciliation After Violent Conflict. The IPU also asked IDEA to serve as a resource for Standing Committee III which prepared a resolution on 'Furthering Parliamentary Democracy in Order to Protect Human Rights and Encourage Reconciliation Among Peoples and Partnership Among Nations', adopted during the course of the Assembly.

Read more ([http://www.idea.int/newsletters/2004/Mar-Apr04/ipu\\_assembly.htm](http://www.idea.int/newsletters/2004/Mar-Apr04/ipu_assembly.htm))

## Other News

- **Crown Princess Victoria of Sweden visits IDEA**

Crown Princess Victoria of Sweden visited IDEA's headquarters in Stockholm on 15 April. She met with members of the different teams in order to learn more about the institute's activities. The visit was part of the Crown Princess' personal programme, which has already seen her fulfil several internships, including with the Swedish Delegation to the United Nations, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and various embassies. Also present during the visit was the Chairperson of the IDEA Board, Lena Hjelm-Wallén, former Deputy Prime Minister of Sweden.

Read more ([http://www.idea.int/newsletters/2004/Mar-Apr04/crown\\_princess.htm](http://www.idea.int/newsletters/2004/Mar-Apr04/crown_princess.htm))

- **'Agora Democrática' Party Strengthening Programme**

Having identified weak political party systems as a major factor behind the current political instability in the countries of the Andes, IDEA and the Asociación Civil Transparencia have set up the 'Agora Democrática' programme. It will focus on: training political party members and civil society representatives; promoting opportunities for dialogue and exchange between political parties and civil society groups; and the provision of technical assistance to political parties to help ensure more inclusive and transparent processes.

Read more ([http://www.idea.int/newsletters/2004/Mar-Apr04/agora\\_party\\_programme.htm](http://www.idea.int/newsletters/2004/Mar-Apr04/agora_party_programme.htm))

- **IDEA cooperation with Mexico moves into higher gear**

During her visit to Mexico City 15-23 April, the Secretary General Karen Fogg, accompanied by Daniel Zovatto, Director for Latin America, met Dr Luis Ernesto Derbez, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and a range of politicians, officials and commentators to discuss future cooperation. Specific agreements were signed with the Federal Electoral Commission (IFE) and with the Electoral Tribunal. IDEA has long standing cooperation with both institutions and several joint projects in view. First up will be a workshop on electoral dispute resolution (EDR) bringing together EDR specialists from around the world in Mexico City on 26–28 May.

- **Fifth CIVICUS World Assembly**

Recognising cooperation with civil society organizations as essential to the promotion of democracy, IDEA participated in the Fifth World Assembly of the World Alliance for Citizen Participation (CIVICUS)—an international grouping of civil society organizations. Held in Gaborone, Botswana, on 21–25 March, and involving 700 participants from 100 countries, the meeting centred on the theme of ‘Acting Together for a Just World’. Part of IDEA’s contribution was a paper on ‘political justice’.

Read more (<http://www.idea.int/newsletters/2004/Mar-Apr04/civicus.htm>)

- **South Africa Celebrates Ten Years of Democracy**

On 14 April, millions of South Africans voted in the country’s third democratic election, coinciding with ten years of democracy. South African citizens, political parties, international and local observers and members of the diplomatic community applauded the level of transparency and efficiency associated with the polls. Julie Ballington of IDEA was on secondment to the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) from 29 March–16 April, working in the Commission Services Directorate. She worked directly with the international observers (216 from 27 countries, mainly from Africa) and the diplomatic missions, and advised the Chair, Brigalia Bam, who is also an IDEA Board member, on issues related to the participation of women in electoral processes in South Africa and the SADC region.

### ...Did You Know?

- South African Commissioner on Gender, Themba Kgasi, visited IDEA’s headquarters on 1 April. She gave a presentation on gender and political participation in South Africa over the past ten years. Read more ([http://www.idea.int/newsletters/2004/Mar-Apr04/Gender\\_and\\_Political\\_Participation\\_in\\_South\\_Africa.pdf](http://www.idea.int/newsletters/2004/Mar-Apr04/Gender_and_Political_Participation_in_South_Africa.pdf))
- A report of a workshop held in Lima, Peru, on 20 January 2004, on ‘Women, Electoral Reform and Political Parties’ is now available on the IDEA website, entitled *Mujer, Partidos Políticos y Reforma Electoral*. Read more ([http://www.idea.int/newsletters/2004/Mar-Apr04/workshop\\_report\\_lima.pdf](http://www.idea.int/newsletters/2004/Mar-Apr04/workshop_report_lima.pdf))

### Staff News

- Ms Kristen Sample (USA) became IDEA Peru programme manager in March. She will also continue to serve (as she has since 2003) as the IDEA regional advisor on women’s political participation for Latin America. Before joining IDEA, Ms Sample worked for Catholic Relief Services in Central and South America, focusing on the strengthening of civil society.
- Ms Mileydi Fougstedt (Cuba/Sweden) joined IDEA in April as administrative assistant. Before joining IDEA she worked at a law firm.
- Mr Per Nordlund (Sweden) joined IDEA in April as senior programme officer on political parties. For the past four years he has served as Sida’s regional advisor on democracy and human rights, based in Harare, Zimbabwe.