

STATEMENT BY DR. JANARDHAN WAGHMARE, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT AND
MEMBER OF THE INDIAN DELEGATION, ON AGENDA ITEM 11 – SUPPORT BY THE
UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM OF THE EFFORTS OF GOVERNMENTS TO PROMOTE AND
CONSOLIDATE NEW YORK RESTORED DEMOCRACIES AT THE 64TH SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON NOVEMBER 09, 2009

Mr. President,

At the outset I would like to congratulate the delegation of Qatar for introducing the draft resolution on the important issue of “support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies”. We are happy to co-sponsor the resolution.

We would also like to take this opportunity to thank Qatar for their successfully stewardship of the Chair of the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies (ICNRD) during the last three years and would like to assure Venezuela of our support during their forthcoming chairing of this process.

Mr. President,

The ICNRD process has come a long way since its inception with only thirteen countries in Manila more than twenty-one years ago. Today, this process has the participation of more than a hundred countries in its activities and with membership open to all the Member States of the United Nations.

This underscores the importance of the principles and purposes of the Conference and the success of this initiative.

We are also happy to note that this process has helped countries to share experiences on democracy as well as identify means to promote pluralistic and participatory democracy. We look forward to institutionalization of ICNRD activities.

Mr. President,

India is the world's largest democracy and we are proud at upholding the highest traditions of democracy since our independence more than sixty years back.

We draw particular satisfaction from the manner in which we conduct our elections. Since the past few years, we have been using electronic voting machines (EVMs). This has allowed our Election Commission to declare results within hours of the start of the counting process even though, on an average, our constituencies comprise over a million voters. A few months back, we elected the 15th Lok Sabha, the Lower House of Parliament, in a mammoth process that involved more than 700 million voters exercising their franchise to elect 543 Members of Parliament.

Mr. President,

We are also proud of yet another democratic process at the grassroots level in India. We have an institutionalized system of local self-governance in rural India since 1993 through the system of Panchayati Raj. A unique feature of this grass-roots empowerment is the component of gender empowerment which involves one-third of the elected seats being reserved for women. As a result, we have over a million elected women representatives in the country.

Mr. President,

Our experience has also shown that democracy is a powerful tool in successfully involving people in meeting the challenges of development. It allows their active participation in and influencing of government actions in the direction of peoples aspirations. It also ensures a voice for the most vulnerable and weakest sections of society.

Our experience also corroborates that implementation of proactive development policies and economic reforms, when coupled with a liberal democratic polity, leads to overall stability and growth of the country.

Mr. President,

India, being a developing country itself, is in a unique position of understanding the problems that other developing countries face while embracing democracy.

We have been sharing our experience, institutional capabilities and training infrastructure with nations that share our democratic values and beliefs and would like to benefit from the experience of other democracies..

In this context, we are happy to be one of the major contributors to the United Nations Democracy Fund and serve on its Advisory Board. We have also been offering our expertise bilaterally and through other multilateral fora promoting democratic ideals and the Rule of Law. We have also been active supporters of activities of the UNDP in the field of good governance.

Mr. President,

India is strongly committed to the underlying values and principles inspiring of the ICNRD. We would continue to support this as well as to provide necessary assistance to further consolidate, strengthen and support it.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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