"Empowering Community of Democracies (CD)"

CD as a Promoter of Democracies

Unlike our expectation, path towards democracy has not always been progressive. From the recent events of the Arab Spring spreading like wildfire and bringing an end to authoritarian regimes, we have seen a glimpse of hope for democracy taking root and beginning to bud throughout the region. At the same time, however, we have witnessed a staggered transition to democracy in many of these countries thereafter. We also have seen a regression in new democracies. In Asia alone, countries like Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Bangladesh have experienced the enforcement of draconian laws by their respective governments and shrinking civil society space.

To provide a common voice and communally combat these hardships, the role of an international platform like the Community for Democracies (CD) is vital. During his interview with the World Movement for Democracy, President of the Council of Community of Democracies, Bob LaGamma, pinpointed the importance of such an institution. He stated that, "[international institutions like CD] creates legitimacy to a democratic space. When a community is dedicated to democracy authoritarian regimes find it more difficult to violate human rights."

Maintaining this democratic space over 14 years of its existence, the CD has made milestones in the advocacy for democracy. It has encouraged governments to create a democracy fund in the United Nations (UN), which led to the founding of the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF). A democracy caucus was created within the United Nations, allowing countries to act together on resolutions. Furthermore, working groups on specific issues related to democracy have been established. These working groups allowed governments and civil societies to work together to push forward agendas on the issues, such as gender equality.

Challenges

With these impressive track records, expectation on the role of the CD in promoting democracy in Asia is ever increasing. However, currently the CD lacks sufficient Asian government and civil society representation within it, which places limitations on the CD to create and maintain a democratic community and space in Asia.

In October 2013, the Asia Democracy Network (ADN), a multi-stakeholder regional network of civil societies advocating democracy, was launched to strengthen solidarity and voice of Asia in promoting democracy. One of the main functions of ADN is to connect with international democracy associations like the CD to develop and relay the views of civil society in Asia.

An ADN-CD partnership is vital since the ADN can provide the Asian representation that

the CD lacks and fulfill its objectives in Asia. In order to strengthen the CD's presence and effectiveness in the Asian context, the CD's limitations and challenges should be overcome.

Lack of Transparency One of the issues that is continuously raised is the lack of transparency in the CD's decision to grant a membership. It was pointed out that main power governments are overly judgmental on the membership decision which is neither objective nor standardized.

Repetitive Declarations The criticism that the CD is "all talk no action" indicates that it is now time for the CD to focus on implementation of the declarations adoptedat the Ministerial Conference. Like the European Union experience, dialogue on the necessity of economic incentives and a rewards system for the implementation of democracy is long overdue.

Segmentalization A laudable aspect of the CD is that, despite it being a governmental cooperative platform, it has been successful in being holistic and inclusive of civil societies, parliament, and the private sector. However, there lack implementation of bringing these groups together and inducing cooperation. It is necessary to start developing a ways forward in the cooperation among multi-stakeholders.

Limitations of Expansion There has not been a significant increase in the number of participating countries since the first conference in 2000. On the contrary, by the 6th Ministerial Conference held in 2011 in Vilnius, the number of countries participating was reduced to 70. At the time of its founding, 17 countries were in the convening group; as of 2014, a total of 24 countries participate as the convening group. There is a need to think about expanding the spectrum and number of members.

Emerging New Forums Recently, similar cooperation forums, such as the Open Government Partnership (OGP), have taken form. The establishments of these cooperative platforms indicate that the movement for collaboration and the passion to promote democratic ideas and values remains strong. On the other hand, it is also a sign that existing forums are not doing their tasks, requiring new ones to take form. There is a need to reassess in what ways the CD and other multi-stakeholder platforms can cooperate so that their agendas are not repetitive.

CD-ADN Collaboration

The limitations and challenges identified above are not applicable only to the CD. In comparison to other international organizations, the CD requires multilateral efforts to further develop and grow. Despite its limitations mentioned above, the CD has the potential to become a major contributor to the promotion and protection of democracy around the world. The CD has been a major platform for governments' to collectively mobilize and share commitments to strengthen democratic values and standards. Most notable traits of the CD are its comprehensive emphasis on the international cooperation

of governments, civil societies, and the private sector.

Until now, there has not been a representative or unified presence of civil society organizations from the Asian region, advocating the empowering of the CD. Fortunately, as a partial solution to the ongoing dilemma concerning developing an Asia-customized model for democracy cooperation, an Asian regional civil society multi-stakeholder platform was launched in Seoul, 2013, with the goal of preserving democratic values and standards. This platform is called the Asia Democracy Network. It was first suggested in Lima, Peru in 2012 during the 7th World Movement for Democracy Assembly, and its importance was highlighted again in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, in 2013 at the Civil Society Organizations' parallel meeting accompanying the 7th Ministerial Conference of the CD. The ADN is an appropriate platform to discuss ways to advance for the CD's agendas in the regional context.

ADN's Proposal of "Empowering CD"

In order to achieve the following objectives, the ADN is holding an international conference on "Empowering the Community of Democracies." The short term goal of this conference is to prepare an agenda for the upcoming 8th CD Ministerial Conference and Civil Society Conference in El Salvador. Its long-term goal is to develop a multi-stakeholder cooperative model within the Asian region.

Short-term: Preparation for the 8th CD Ministerial Conference, 2015

1. Evaluation of the 2013 CD Ulaanbaatar Declaration
   A. CD Reformation: Previous declarations, mainly the 2011 Vilnius and the 2013 Ulaanbaatar declarations, will be examined in an attempt to institutionalize the CD reform agendas suggested by civil societies and academics.
   B. CD-UN Liaison Measures: Devise measures to strengthen connections with the UN and its sub-institutions in order to increase the binding power of the decisions made at the CD meetings.

2. 2015 Civil Society Initiated Agenda Preparation to make an input to the 8th CD Ministerial Conference in El Salvador
   A. Proposal: Discuss possible issues to be raised in the agenda for the upcoming Ministerial meeting.

3. Strengthen Democracy and the role of Civil Society in Asia
   A. Human Rights and Democracy Monitoring Mechanism: Develop a Human Rights and Democracy Monitoring mechanism to strengthen and promote accountability.
   B. Strengthen capacity of civil societies in Asia: Discuss and explore solutions to limitations of democracy promotion and advancement in the Asian region.

Long-term: Create a cooperation model for multi-stakeholders

1. Develop issues that will not collide with the reasoning of the emphasis on "sovereignty" and with the emphasis of universal values in human rights and democracy.
2. Develop issues in regards to democracy to overcome conflicts between State and Civil Societies
3. Conduct Preliminary discussions to find solution to conflict that arise between value and interest when it comes to democracy.

Methodology and Timelines

1. International Conference on Empowering the Community of Democracies
   - Date: November 24-25, 2014
   - Venue: Lexington Hotel and National Assembly Building, Seoul, Korea
   - Participation Scope:
     i. CD: Secretary General and Staffs
     ii. Government: Officials responsible for multilateral diplomacy
     iii. Local Government: Governors
     iv. Inter-Governmental Organization: UNESCO, IIDEA, UNDEF
     v. Parliament: IPU, ICAPP
     vi. Corporate: IOD, CIPE
     vii. Civil Society: Head representatives of each pillars
     viii. Academia
     ix. Think Tank
     x. Democracy Foundation: NED, NDI, EED, TFD, KDF, IPD

Expected Outcomes

The benefits and anticipated outcomes of the International Conference on Empowering Community of Democracies are three-folds.

First, the conference will assess each clause of the 2013 Ulaanbaatar Declaration and prepare specific issues to raise at the 2015 El Salvador Ministerial Conference, so that the CD would not fall into the meta-discourse on democracy and instead produce tangible results. In addition, the conference will discuss the areas that require improvement in order to enhance the CD's effectiveness as a cooperative platform of democracy promotion.

Second, Asian participation in the CD process has been limited. This conference will gather representatives of governments, civil societies, and private sector from across Asia to discuss the ways the region, states, and various sectors within them can cooperate to actively be a part of the CD process.

Third, the South Korean government was a main sponsor for the last year's Founding Assembly of the ADN, which showed its awareness of the importance of taking an

initiative role for democracy promotion in Asia. As a continuation of its efforts, the South Korea government is also serving as the main sponsor for this year's conference. This conference will demonstrate that the South Korea's vision for democracy diplomacy would ultimately strengthen democracies within Asia, thus greatly contribute to the spread of democratic values around the world.