

MONTEVIDEO DECLARATION

Democratic Culture and Governance

NOVEMBER 1990

Declaration adopted by the International Conference on «Democratic Culture and Development: Towards the Third Millenium in Latin America; Organized jointly by UNESCO and the PAX Institute, under the auspices of the Government of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay
27-30 November 1990, Montevideo, Uruguay.

A Democracy founded on an Ethics of the Individual

«We are living in times which are witnessing the beginnings of a new phase... We know what went before us but we do not know where we are precisely. What exactly is this democracy, this freedom that we are presently constructing... a freedom of citizens who, although freed from the hold of an omnipresent State, must [nevertheless] not be sacrificed in turn to new corporate idols... This democracy should be truly based on the freedom of the spirit,... on the freedom and dignity of man». (Opening speech to the Montevideo Conference by Mr. Julio M. SANGUINETTI, former President of the Republic of Uruguay, President of the PAX Institute)

Culture, the First Prerequisite for Lasting Democracy

«It is often forgotten, in the initial enthusiasm aroused when... new political structures are set up, that cultural change is a long and complex process. In practice, customs, habits, prejudices and traditions can freeze many enthusiastic initiatives. Consolidating pluralistic and open democratic societies will only be possible if a real culture of democracy is present during the political process since, in the final analysis, only cultural change can guarantee the consistency and sustainability of political change... Learning, teaching, practising and spreading the culture of democracy are the goals around which we all can meet if we are to ensure that democracy takes lasting roots in tomorrow's world» (Opening speech to the Montevideo Conference by Mr. Federico MAYOR, Director-General of UNESCO).

Governmental Effectiveness or «Democracy the Day After»

«Once voting has taken place and the first premise of democracy - the constitution of a legitimate government - has been established, it is often assumed that the democratic process has been fully achieved, whereas in reality it has only begun to exert its influence on society. An analysis which only highlights the legitimacy of the democratic process while neglecting the issue of governance does not go to the heart of the real problem... [For while]... economic development is indeed an objective for a democratic government, we must, citizens and leaders alike, refine and adjust our cultural patterns in order to achieve such a goal». (Opening speech to the Montevideo Conference by Mr. Luis A. LACALLE, President of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay)

Summary of the Montevideo Conference*

The Conference on «Democratic Culture and Development: towards the Third Millennium in Latin America» took place in Montevideo, Uruguay, from 27 to 30 November 1990 and was organized jointly by UNESCO and the PAX Institute under the auspices of the Government of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay.

The Montevideo Conference brought together at the very highest level about one hundred political and scientific personalities from Latin America and other regions. In an attempt to respond to the growing concern in countries of various regions regarding the democratization of political regimes and the democratic governance of the development process, Heads of State, former Presidents, Ministers and world-famous specialists in the fields of political science, the law, sociology and economics discussed the conditions for the transition towards, and the consolidation of, democratic systems. In that connection, the participants analysed the institutional and political foundations of democracy while stressing the importance of political culture in consolidating democratic processes; they also gave in-depth attention to highlighting the complex relations between economic policies and democracy, as well as the vital question of supranational bolstering of the democratic process through political concertation and economic integration at regional and interregional levels.

The Montevideo Conference is particularly important for UNESCO since it is the first far-reaching international action undertaken by the Organization on the subject of democracy. This action constitutes a natural extension of the Organization's ethical and intellectual mission in the fields of Peace and Human Rights.

In addition to a fruitful and original exchange of views and experience, the Conference adopted the Declaration of Montevideo on Democratic Culture and Governance, set out hereunder. This Declaration provides an important input to international reflection on democracy and is intended to serve as a reference for future regional and interregional action, particularly as regards education, social research, cultural policy and the development of legal systems and institutions.

UNESCO action in this field will be followed up by an International Forum on Culture and Democracy which will be convened this year in Prague, Czechoslovakia. UNESCO's Draft Programme and Budget for 1992-1993 also provided for other important activities concerning democracy.

* The proceedings of the Montevideo Conference will be published in the coming months.

Democratic Culture and Governance

PREAMBLE

1. In almost every region of the world, and particularly in Latin America and Europe, the foundations are being laid in public life for the difficult transition to political and economic structures that restore responsibility, initiative and decision-making authority to all social actors. Authoritarian or centralizing forms of organization, which gave a hegemonic State the exclusive right to determine political, social and economic options, are giving way to an increasingly general desire for a new legitimacy based on the popular will and on the recognition of political life as subject to the rule of law.

2. Intellectuals and the Establishment in different countries and regions increasingly tend to view modern democracy not only as the basic expression of popular sovereignty («one person, one vote»), taking care to ensure the independence of justice, but also as a political practice encompassing pluralism, solidarity and participation in which human rights and civil liberties not only behave as limits to the arbitrary exercise of power but also constitute the ethical basis of social consensus in a civil society formed of free and equal individuals; in which the State, as guardian of national sovereignty and guarantor of the public weal, becomes the supreme defender of civil and individual rights and freedoms; in which conflicts of interest are peacefully resolved in social contracts supported by the law; and, lastly, in which economic activity, concurrently with the democratization of the political process and as a logical manifestation of the same compelling need for change and social progress, develops towards more open forms of initiative and control involving the State, the market and other social actors that enjoy considerable discretion in their decision-making.

3. This more complex and differentiated civil society beckons from the future, challenging the very foundations of our way of life as individuals and communities. In a real pluralist democracy, law, liberty and social justice have to be reconciled. The elimination of social disparities, exclusion and marginality and the furtherance of the development process are major challenges to social imagination and to the solidarity of the different social actors, especially the State.

4. Democracy and sustainable development will depend in large measure on the ability of individual societies to modernize from within, especially through changes and adjustments that enhance the State's efficiency and legitimacy in arbitrating conflicts and administering justice and in providing encouragement and guidance in the economic and cultural fields. It is in this way that existing disparities can be overcome and a new national consensus around the joint project of a more just and more effectively pluralist civil society be promoted.

5. However, given the far-reaching changes in the forms and structures of power in the world at large, there seems little prospect of devising effective and lasting solutions to the complex web of political and economic problems at the level of individual countries. Social change at world level and corresponding changes in the region make it increasingly essential to build up regional and interregional co-operation. With ideological polarization vanishing, the challenge of the future consists in translating public and private resolve into supranational co-operation strategies that ensure political and economic transition at minimum social cost. It is certainly in this context of broader co-operation that more effective action can be taken to counter social exclusion and reduce internal disparities while at the same time lessening external economic, scientific and technological dependence through more effective integration of the States of the region into a world system whose political and economic foundations are rapidly evolving.

6. However, changes in the practical exercise of power and the reorganization of systems of production give rise to changes not only in political, social and economic institutions but also in culture and in the behaviour of the individuals and groups moulded by that culture. The other vital dimension of the challenge facing societies in the early stages of democracy is the forging of a democratic culture. A pluralist democratic society cannot work unless it is based on value and knowledge systems that have been spontaneously accepted by a majority of individuals, empowering them to make effective use of political and legal institutions and guiding their behaviour in accordance with criteria about the common good and of justice, equity and social peace. There is therefore an increasing awareness of the need for thoroughgoing cultural and institutional renewal so as to provide a channel for the clashes among the different ideas and forms of social activity that inevitably occur when people are allowed free expression, and to resolve divergences through social achievements representing the creative embodiment of a whole people.

PRINCIPLES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7. Within this general context, the Conference on Democratic Culture and Development in Latin America, held on the initiative of the Government of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay, UNESCO, and the PAX Institute, which has brought together in Montevideo distinguished representatives of the world of politics and sciences from the region and beyond, on the threshold of the third millennium:

A. Unanimously reaffirms the vital importance of democracy for the future of mankind in that it is:

- (a) the only political system and practice based on the sovereignty of the people, open to the active participation in public life of all sectors of society and all shades of opinion, without any discrimination;
- (b) the only system and practice for public life capable of bringing about a society based on the rule of law and on the recognition of human rights and of civil and individual freedoms as the ethical basis for a civil society of free and equal individuals, and where the State appears as supreme defender of those rights and freedoms;
- (c) the only system and practice for public life which is geared to the peaceful and concerted pursuit of social justice, equity and individual and community well-being under the law.

B. Therefore recommends that States and relevant international governmental and non-governmental organizations commit themselves to promoting democracy, within the framework of regional and international co-operation, through:

- (a) the development of comparative research in social and judicial sciences at the regional and interregional levels concerning the nature, functioning and efficiency of the political institutions and machinery and the laws and customs that make for progress towards participatory democracy and towards the democratic governance of development processes, and, in particular, concerning the new functions and forms of organization of the State as defender of rights and promoter of democratic social processes and development;
- (b) the development of studies on the possibility of establishing or reinforcing, with the objective of political and economic regional integration, jurisdictions at the regional level in the field of human rights;

- (c) the development of national, regional and interregional education programmes designed, with a view to developing a democratic culture, to enhance the people's awareness of the values of freedom, solidarity, justice, social peace and tolerance and to provide them with the knowledge on political institutions and law they need to exercise democracy in a way that is genuinely guided by the principles of human rights;
 - (d) the development of national and regional cultural policies and structures conducive to the different social actors' participation in national public life in a politically responsible way.
- C. Recommends in particular that UNESCO, which has a specific responsibility within the framework of the United Nations with regard to human rights and peace, should give priority in its biennial programmes and medium-term plans to activities aimed at promoting democracy in social and cultural life. Specifically, it should, in co-operation with interested Member States and with relevant public and private institutional networks:**
- (a) promote and organize forums for reflection and exchanges of ideas among the intellectual and political communities;
 - (b) develop for subsequent inclusion in general human rights and peace education programmes contents about democracy and democratic values;
 - (c) carry out comparative studies concerning existing mechanisms for: (i) negotiation and peaceful settlement of conflicts of interest; (ii) interaction between civil society and the State; (iii) horizontal social participation and communication.

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Have Given Their Support to the Montevideo Declaration

Member States

Argentina - Bolivia - Brasil - Colombia - Costa Rica
Chile - Ecuador - Mexico - Panama - Paraguay
Dominican Republic - Uruguay - Venezuela - Hungary

Scientific Organizations

Latinoamerican Social Sciences Council (CLACSO)
Latinoamerican Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO)

Non Governmental Organizations

South American Commission for Regional Peace