

Remarks of Ambassador Luigi R. Einaudi
U.S. Permanent Representative to the OAS
on the
UNIT FOR THE PROMOTION OF DEMOCRACY

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The United States has from the start supported the work of the OAS Unit for the Promotion of Democracy. When Canada introduced a resolution to create the Unit at the OAS General Assembly in Asuncion we welcomed it enthusiastically. We applauded the successes of the Secretary General and his dedicated team as they carried out election observation missions in El Salvador, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, Panama, Paraguay, Suriname, and, of course, Haiti. Today, we are pleased to support the Program of Support produced by the Juridical and Political Affairs Committee.

The initiative that created the Democracy Unit in June 1990 was an idea whose time had come. Thanks to its prompt and effective deployment to requesting member states, the OAS Democracy Unit has been a constructive presence around the hemisphere. The Unit has assisted democratic consolidation and concretely affirmed the democratic solidarity of our inter-American community.

The Unit has a well-deserved reputation for "getting the job done." It is responsive to member country needs, flexible and efficient, objective and fair. It works well because it is lead well by the Secretary General, served well by professionals of the OAS Secretariat, and strongly supported by the member states.

But the Unit merits more than our praise as a premier international election observation body. From its conception, the Unit was meant to go beyond election observation. The Program of Support before us today reflects the broader role we foresee for this pioneering institution.

As an instrument for the "promotion of democracy," the program embraces activities across a wide spectrum -- all geared to strengthen democratic institutions and processes. Working at the request of member states and through the governments of member states, Unit activities can be directed towards all branches of government, to political parties, to nongovernmental organizations and the media, and to the application of human rights.

The Section on Advisory Services of the Program defines the scope of those services. Information heads the list -- this includes not only collecting useable data, but information

sharing as well, exchanges of experience among experts and practitioners in government. The Unit does not have the staff to undertake research, but it should act as a catalyst for research on comparative institutions meeting democratic needs.

We have in this Organization 34 member states, each with its own traditions, needs, and ideals. Training and education should express these varied experiences. It should foster greater practical cooperation among member states. The Unit's provision of institutional support might involve advice on techniques for reducing delays in the administration of justice or ways to use information systems to track draft legislation or retrieve legal precedents.

The examples I have just given are drawn from among projects requested of U.S. AID, but no examples that any of us can give of the Unit's potential can, at this stage, be more than illustrative. Actual projects will depend on how the requesting states choose to engage the Unit.

The Unit is not meant to have a monopoly in field of democratic development. Instead, it is meant to serve as a "focal point" for activities, coordinating with other bodies in the OAS and, as appropriate, with academic, nongovernmental, and other entities in the field.

We envision Unit personnel seeking and maintaining regular professional contact with counterparts in the field. In this way, the Unit can render useful service to member states by simply matching a request for services with a referral to an existing institution able to act on the request.

To date, the Unit's funding has been for election observation. Not all its activities will require the level of funding of a long-term, comprehensive election observation mission. Many advisory services can be planned and budgetted well in advance. Therefore it makes good sense to have regular funds cover these programs.

Beyond sound management practice, however, it is important for the OAS to support the Unit from the Regular Fund. Representative democracy is a key charter principle. The Unit for the Promotion of Democracy is a symbol of our collective commitment to that principle. It is only right that we signify our collective support for Unit by funding its more programatic activities out of the regular budget.

We must all support the Unit. This does not always require financial contributions. The concept of technical assistance -- recognized in Section III of the Program -- is very relevant to the Unit's work. Expertise and experience are the key resources for institutional development. These are

human resources. They are available throughout the hemisphere. Each member state has had its own unique experience with democracy. Although none of us may have the final word on how best to strengthen democratic processes, we all have something to share with each other.

The Unit is positioned to marshall the collective experience of a democratic community of nations. It can serve as the venue for practical exchanges among member states on specific problems of democracy building. For its part, each member state can contribute its most valuable resource to the Unit, its own "lessons learned" in the course of consolidating democracy.

The debates of the Juridical and Political Affairs Committee on the Program of Support have been thoughtful -- and useful as well, producing a document which embodies a consensus on the role we envision for the Democracy Unit.

It is time now that we vote our support to Unit by approving the Program of Support. An approved Program will provide guidance to the Secretary General and his team in the years ahead. It will signal to potential recipients what assistance and advice they can look to the Unit to provide. Likewise, potential donors will know in what ways their funding can be of value.

Mr. Chairman, action on the Program of Support comes in the midst of our efforts to help restore democracy in Haiti. The coup in Haiti and its aftermath remind us that promoting democracy must go hand-in-hand with protecting democracy against the threat of coups. Many of us have said there is a special urgency about protecting democracy in Haiti -- and restoring democratic constitutional rule -- because the OAS and its member states worked hard to promote a free and fair election in Haiti a year ago.

The ultimate success of our earlier effort in support of free elections will depend on the present, multifaceted effort to restore democracy to Haiti. Conversely, in Haiti and elsewhere, we pursue efforts at the promotion of democracy with the hope that strengthened institutions will prove resistant to those who would disrupt democratic process and overthrow elected governments.

The present Haiti effort, of course, encompasses much more than the Unit could undertake on its own or even coordinate in all its aspects. Special Missions, the Human Rights Commission, and even an OAS presence in Haiti created by the Foreign Ministers under the name of OEA-DEMOC are among the instruments being used or envisioned by the Ministers. And, of

course, Member States have undertaken numerous measures in accordance with the October 3 and October 8 resolutions.

A tasking for the Unit in the evolving situation of Haiti has not arisen. But the Program of Support, as amended in the previous meeting of the Juridical and Political Affairs Committee, makes clear the Unit stands ready to offer its services in support of the Organization. Whether it does so in name or not, the invaluable experience gained by the Haitian observation of a year ago is an asset of the Unit we would do well to use as we come closer to acting upon the democracy-support functions called for in the October 8 Resolution.

Just as promotion and protection of democracy work hand-in-hand, so too must political will and institutional support reinforce each other. The Democracy Unit has been and will be an important tool in the ongoing efforts of the OAS to both protect and promote democratic institutions and processes. Its ultimate value, however, will depend on our willingness as Member States to use it and to support it.