

Press release

United Nations Democracy Fund Calls for Funding Applications

The United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) calls for funding applications for projects aimed at promoting and strengthening democracy. It will open its second round of funding applications from 15 November to 18 December 2007. Only on-line applications will be accepted, and they may be submitted either in English or French. The application procedure is described in the project proposal guidelines available on the UNDEF website, <http://www.un.org/democracyfund>.

As for the first round of UNDEF projects in 2006, the thematic categories for applications are:

- strengthening democratic dialogue and support for constitutional processes;
- civil society empowerment;
- civic education, voter registration and strengthening of political parties;
- citizen's access to information;
- human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- accountability, transparency and integrity.

In line with United Nations values, priority will be given to projects that enhance inclusiveness and gender equality.

Selection process

The selection process will comprise two stages:

- The submission on-line by applicants of a project concept, from which the Secretary-General, after advice from the United Nations secretariat and the UNDEF Advisory Board, will approve a short-list; and
- The elaboration by short-listed applicants of an agreed project document, based on which disbursements will commence.

The short-listing of projects will be considered "approvals in principle", while final approval will depend upon successful finalization of the detailed project document, which is required to be completed within two months of advice of short-listing. Project Document Guidelines will be available on the UNDEF website to assist short-listed applicants to prepare detailed project documents.

UNDEF support will be provided principally to civil society activities at the country level. A small number of regional or global projects will also receive support. UNDEF will consider proposals from civil society organizations as well as from governments and official institutions. In certain cases, United Nations bodies may also be considered as applicants.

United Nations: Largest provider of democracy assistance

In his address to the Seventh Forum on Democracy, Development and Free Trade in Doha, Qatar in April 2007, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said: “Over the past 15 years, the United Nations has become the world's largest provider of democracy assistance. We have become experts in helping countries emerging from conflicts to build democratic institutions, such as parliaments and electoral commissions. And we support efforts to strengthen judicial systems, local authorities and civil society. United Nations support includes the Democracy Fund, which works to strengthen the democratic fabric through alliances with Government, civil society and other partners.”

UNDEF was established in July 2005 as a United Nations General Trust Fund. Its primary purpose is to promote democracy. UNDEF funds projects that build and strengthen democratic institutions, promote human rights, and ensure the participation of all groups in democratic processes. 30 Member States have thus far made voluntary contributions to UNDEF, amounting to US\$62.6 million. Further contributions are expected later this year.

In the first round of project selection and fund disbursements in 2006, the United Nations Secretary-General approved 125 projects worth US\$36 million, covering all regions. The largest share went to Sub-Saharan Africa (37 percent). Over 60 percent of recommended projects were submitted by civil society organizations, 24 percent by United Nations agencies and 14 percent by governmental or regional organizations, most often in partnership with one another.