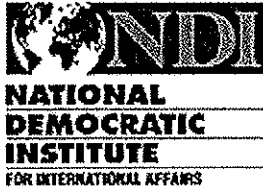


[Back](#)



The W. Averell Harriman Democracy Award: 2002

Prepared Remarks of Kenneth Wollack

President, NDI

15th Annual W. Averell Harriman Democracy Award

September 30, 2002

Good evening, I'm Ken Wollack, president of the National Democratic Institute. On behalf of our board of directors and staff I'm pleased to welcome you here tonight and to thank you for your support.

Over the past 15 years, we've been honored to recognize the special contributions of men and women, here and abroad, who personify the commitment to democracy and human rights that are at the heart of NDI's work. And tonight, we are once again gratified that so many of you have joined us to recognize this year's recipients of NDI's W. Averell Harriman Democracy Award, the Organization of American States and Oswaldo Payá of the Varela Project in Cuba. Through the OAS, we also recognize the leadership role of secretary-general César Gaviria. And through Oswaldo Payá we honor all the organizers and the tens of thousands of signers of the Varela Project's petition drive for freedom and democracy.

Before we formally begin tonight's program, we are privileged to hear an invocation from the most reverend Francisco Gonzalez, auxiliary bishop of Washington. Your Grace.

One recipient of the Harriman Award this year represents the celebratory side of our gathering. Recognizing an intergovernmental organization that has grown and evolved into an indispensable force for democracy. The other recipient - Oswaldo Payá - represents a different side: the hard reality that the democratic struggle goes on. Payá's cause transcends politics and ideology. This award was one of our responses to the appeal of Cuban democrats for greater international solidarity with the Varela Project -- this uniquely Cuban initiative with its roots entirely within the island.

Oswaldo Payá is the missing democrat at this event. Despite his efforts to obtain a permit from the Cuban government to travel to this ceremony, his application was never acted upon. As such, he is the second recipient unable to accept this award personally. The first being Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma. When informed of this fact, Oswaldo said that despite being worlds apart from her, he felt in good company.

Anticipating this decision by the Cuban government, NDI decided last month to produce a documentary on Mr. Payá and the Project. It will be premiered this evening and I think you will find it inspiring.

We are also fortunate to have three personal representative of Oswaldo Payá with us and I would like to recognize their presence -- Marcelino Miyares, president of the Christian Democratic Party of Cuba, and Francisco de Armas.

Tonight NDI breaks with 14 years of tradition by recognizing two recipients from the same region. This was a deliberate decision by NDI's board of directors. International attention and resources are all too often directed to other parts of the world--both in moments of democratic breakthrough and during times of crisis. This event tonight, with its focus on the Americas, was designed to send a message. To Washington, and to the family of nations throughout the hemisphere: that we must rededicate ourselves to the vision of democratic governance for every citizen of the Americas.

In many ways Latin America was a vanguard for the democratic revolution that swept the world during the past decade. The people of this hemisphere defied the so-called experts who claimed that democracy was somehow alien to inheritors of Spanish patriarchy.

Millions of citizens in this hemisphere reclaimed their fundamental political rights and in doing so, demonstrated to other societies, each with their own distinct history, culture and religion, that democratic aspirations are universal.

Democracy is never a given. In every generation, it is always earned anew. So it is now, as the people and governments of Latin America confront the new challenge of governing. A generation ago, the threat came from entrenched dictatorships. Now it emanates from weak political parties and legislatures, from public cynicism about the possibility of change.

Parties and legislatures must do more than look democratic; they must be democratic in their daily existence. They must be open, accessible, ethical, and accountable. They must orient their services toward their constituents and define their constituency as the general public and not a privileged elite. This is the next democratic challenge and it has arrived. How political institutions perform will impact democratic culture and economic vitality across the hemisphere.

NDI is now working on these challenges with a new generation of leaders. In eight nations, we are engaged with 28 political parties to support modernization, reform, and renewal. We are working to help connect citizens with their elected representatives and supporting the efforts of political leaders fighting corruption and re-engaging people in political life.

We are hopeful, as well we should be. Renewal is a constant of democratic life. So with that in mind, we are here tonight to issue a call to action and a rededication of resources throughout the Americas.

Since 1984, working in more than 70 countries, in every region of the world, NDI has been privileged to play a part in supporting courageous democrats, both leaders and grassroots activists. And we could not have done so without the help of so many of you, and so many others around the world who are part of the ever-growing international network that is NDI today.

We are honored once again by the presence of members and staff of the United States Congress. Over the years NDI has benefited greatly from the advice, participation, and support of democrats and republicans on capitol hill who recognize that advancing democracy not only reflects our nation's values, but it also serves our interests.

I would also like to recognize the National Endowment for Democracy and the institutions that are part of the endowment family- the American labor movement's Solidarity Center, the International Republican Institute and the Center for International Private Enterprise.

I want to single out for appreciation those who made all of this possible: the corporations. Trade unions, foundations, and individuals who have been so gracious in their support.

At its heart, NDI is a public/private partnership. It represents a community of interests between the private sector and public institutions.

I want to especially welcome John Sweeney, the president of the AFL-CIO. As we all know, so much of the work of democracy and human rights has been advanced by the trade union movement that champions the dignity of working men and women.

I want to welcome the diplomatic corps and political leaders visiting from abroad. The presence of representatives here from new, emerging, and traditional democracies, and yes, from yet-to-be democracies personifies the nature of our work. NDI seeks to bring people together with diverse experiences and expertise to share what they know and what they have learned.

In particular, I would like to recognize the foreign ministers of Honduras, Belize, Guatemala, and Mexico.

NDI is the only organization that enjoys official standing in the three largest, international groupings of political parties -- the Socialist, Liberal and Christian Democratic Internationals. Together the internationals comprise 340 parties in 140 countries. With us tonight is Luis Ayala, secretary general of the Socialist International. The Spanish Prime Minister, Jose Maria Aznar, president of the Christian Democratic International, will be appearing tonight in our documentary film.

NDI has enjoyed the support of four administrations and we are proud to associate ourselves with the Bush administration's commitment to the promotion of democracy abroad. With us this evening are current and former officials from the White House, and the Department of State, as well as from the Agency for International Development, which has been such a vital partner in our democratic development mission.

In recent years, the agencies of the UN have dedicated increasing resources to programs that provide people a real stake in their society. We welcome tonight representatives of these agencies, in particular, the United Nations Development Program, with which NDI enjoys a close partnership in so many regions of the world.

I want to recognize NDI's board of directors and staff. This is a board that supports and guides our work year in and year out. And NDI's staff both in Washington and in field offices throughout the world are the most talented and dedicated group of people I have ever known. I want to say a special word of thanks to NDI Vice President Jean Dunn and Development Director Deborah Ullmer, who organized this dinner. Without Jean's day-to-day leadership of the organization, NDI would simply not function as it does.

Finally, I would like to express our gratitude to those practitioners in this room and thousands of others around the globe who volunteer their time to assist NDI's programs that help build political parties and civic organizations, safeguard elections and promote citizen participation, openness and accountability in government.

As the community of democracies has grown democratic practice has become inseparable from democratic cooperation. Thank you for being with us. And we will return immediately after dinner. Bon appetit.



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Back