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For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
November 6, 2003

Fact Sheet: President Bush Calls for a "forward Strategy of Freedom" to Promote Democracy in the Middle East

Today's Presidential Action

In remarks at the 20th anniversary of the National Endowment for Democracy, President Bush today announced that the United States would pursue a "forward strategy of freedom" to promote democracy throughout the Middle East.

During this time of change in world history, the President said that the advance of freedom is the calling of our times. Promoting democracy and freedom in the Middle East will be a massive and difficult undertaking, but it is worthy of America's effort and sacrifice. As long as freedom and democracy do not flourish in the Middle East, that region will remain stagnant, resentful, and violent -- and serve as an exporter of violence and terror to free nations.

President Bush believes that democracy and Islam can coexist. Millions of Muslims from Turkey to Indonesia to Niger have proven that Islam and democracy are fully compatible.

America has accomplished the task of spreading democracy where it has not existed before, and the President believes that the advance of freedom will increase chances for peace and security for Americans as well as for the people of the Middle East.

The Administration's Record of Accomplishment in Promoting Democracy

A RECORD OF ACCOMPLISHMENT AROUND THE WORLD: The Administration has pursued a policy of promoting freedom and human dignity in every part of the world. We pursue this policy both because it is right and because it also addresses the fear, hatred, and inequality that contributes to terrorism and violence.

Our policy is based on core values that uphold human rights through democracy and the rule of law. We are committed to pursuing freedom and promoting democracy and human rights, through both words and deeds, as a member of the international community.

Greater Middle East: Moved support for democracy in the Middle East to top of regional agenda, including support for individual champions of human rights and for reform efforts in Jordan, Morocco, the Gulf, and elsewhere.

- o **Afghanistan:** Policy based on achieving democracy through the Bonn process and assistance to constitutional, human rights and judicial commissions; established US-Afghan Women's Council and funded centers to promote women's education, entrepreneurship, and political participation.

- o **Iraq:** After removing oppressive regime, now leading international coalition to assist in Iraq's transition to democracy; established Iraqi Governing Council, representing the diversity of Iraqi society, to help chart course towards drafting, ratifying, and implementing a new constitution; building civil society through grants, workshops, consultations, and technical assistance to a wide range of Iraqi groups; provided over \$100 million to date for local governance programs; supported women's conferences; and established Abuse Prevention Unit.

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o Middle East Partnership Initiative: Established first initiative to support political reform efforts and economic development, especially for women and youth.

o Middle East Peace: Placed democracy and human rights at the heart of efforts for a two-state solution to the Israeli/Palestinian dispute, demanded reforms in governance of Palestinian Authority.

Africa: The Administration has an unparalleled record of engagement in Africa that incorporates support for democracy, reform, respect for human dignity and peace on the continent. Our achievements include:

o Liberia: Sponsored UN sanctions; engaged with ECOWAS and key regional actors to negotiate peace deal ending civil war that had serious human rights abuses.

o Sudan: Heavily engaged in the peace process to end Africa's longest-running civil war.

o Zimbabwe: Imposed targeted sanctions against President Mugabe,

Zimbabwean Government officials, and their spouses in an effort to protest and stop policies that undermine democratic processes and institutions.

Asia: Our policy is focused on assisting countries on the path towards democratization and long-term reform, and calling attention to those who fall short.

o Burma: Leads international calls for release of Aung San Suu Kyi and for return to inclusive political dialogue to restore democracy; condemns regime for its human rights abuses; strengthened sanctions on the regime for its imprisonment of democracy leaders and extensive human rights abuses.

o China: Moved from defining progress on human rights solely by prisoner releases to also enhancing rule of law, electoral and other developments by increasing funding for programs from \$7M in FY02 to \$12M in FY03.

o North Korea: Co-sponsored the first UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) resolution on human rights in North Korea to call international attention to abuses; consistently put human rights on the table during multilateral talks among other subjects.

Central Asia: Contact with the region after September 11 focused on war on terror and engagement on human rights practices of countries in the region.

o Democracy and Human Rights Funding after 9/11: Doubled funding for democracy programs in Kyrgyzstan (funded first free printing press) and Turkmenistan; quadrupled funding for democracy programs in Uzbekistan (funded first political party programs) and Tajikistan.

o Human Rights Practices: Sponsored first UNCHR resolution on human rights practices in Belarus and co-sponsored first UNCHR resolution on Turkmenistan; concluded Joint Declarations with Presidents of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan that cite continued progress on democracy and human rights as central to our bilateral relationships.

o Georgia: Appointed James Baker as Presidential Envoy to underscore the need for free and fair parliamentary elections this November. Election results are incoming and we are counting on the Government and people of Georgia to ensure a free and fair outcome.

Western Hemisphere: Commitment to democratic, constitutional governments through the Summit of the Americas's "Democracy Clause." Strong support for multi-lateral engagement to address democratic crises in Bolivia, Venezuela, and Haiti. Continuing efforts to promote rapid, peaceful democratic transition in Cuba.

o Democracy in the region: Concluded Inter-American Democratic Charter, which defines Western Hemisphere by its commitment to democratic principles.

o Cuba: Launched "Initiative for a New Cuba" challenging regime to undertake political and economic reforms; supported resolution at UNCHR this year.

o Haiti: Member of "Group of Friends" working to help the Haitian people build democratic institutions, supporting OAS efforts to resolve the political crisis.

o Venezuela: Member of OAS Secretary General's "Group of Friends" providing support for efforts to comply with OAS Resolution 833 calling for a peaceful, democratic, constitutional, and electoral solution to the political crisis through the referendum process.

International Institutions: Committed to reforming and rejoining international institutions that support human rights, and promoting new initiatives.

o Commission on Human Rights: Actively engaged in reforming UNCHR to realize its potential through membership and other changes.

o UNESCO: Rejoined organization to promote education and democracy.

o UN General Assembly: On November 6, 2003, U.S.-introduced resolution on Women and Political Participation was passed by the UNGA.

Human Dignity: The Administration has taken special efforts to safeguard the dignity of the individual.

o Cloning: Co-sponsored resolution at the UNGA calling for ban on all forms of human cloning.

o Religious Freedom: Worked with OSCE to hold first meetings on religious freedom, including anti-Semitism in Europe.

o Trafficking in Persons: President announced \$50 million to support organizations that rehabilitate women and children who have been trafficked; U.S. efforts have led many governments to improve their own laws and performance.

Programs to Support Democracy and Human Rights: Significantly increased funding levels for Human Rights and Democracy Fund administered by the Department of State.

For more information on the President's initiatives, visit

www.whitehouse.gov

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