



H.E Ban Ki-moon
Secretary-General
United Nations
New York, NY 10017
USA

15th September 2009

Dear Mr Secretary-General

Equipping democracy for resilience in the face of climate change

We send warm greetings on the occasion of this International Day of Democracy, a day on which it is appropriate not only to celebrate the spread of democracy, but also to pause to consider what might lie ahead; to reflect on how this 'least bad' political system might need to adapt for the future: for democracy is the only system that has thus far proven capable of fully respecting the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

There are many threats to democracy. Indeed, we are mindful of the fact that some analyses indicate that fewer than half of the world's people live in democracies. But as members of the United Nations finalise preparations for this December's COP15 UN Climate Change Conference, we write with a specific concern: unless the world's nations take meaningful and decisive action to tackle climate change, democracy itself may be a casualty. For as the costs of mitigating and adapting to climate change rise, it will be increasingly difficult for governments to avoid taking steps that not only interfere with the personal freedoms of their citizens, but also risk alienating citizens, whether or not they vote.

We believe we must now take urgent steps to secure the resilience of our democracies in the face of the social and environmental challenge of climate change. Indeed this, Mr Secretary-General, is the task to which the Foundation for Democracy and Sustainable Development is committed.

You may be assured of our support for the International Day of Democracy. And we ask that you consider our respectful request that in future years the Day also become an opportunity for reflection on the democratic challenge of climate change; for this is at once one of the most significant failures of democracy to date, and one of the greatest challenges that the world's democracies have ever faced together.

We are keen to support the United Nations in taking the steps needed to equip our democracies, as systems of decision-making, to tackle the climate challenge. As citizens, we must empower our elected representatives to embrace longer-term objectives, even if that sometimes impacts upon short-term self-interests. In this task, we are confident that the United Nations will play a central role in catalysing the necessary interchanges and negotiations between nations and their citizens.

Yours sincerely

[signatures omitted in web version]

John Elkington (Chair) and Halina Ward (Director)
Foundation for Democracy and Sustainable Development