

REMARKS BY RICHARD W. SOUDRIETTE
PRESIDENT, IFES
FOURTH GLOBAL ELECTION ORGANIZATION CONFERENCE
WASHINGTON, D.C.
MARCH 27, 2007

*ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD AND STAFF OF THE IFES, I AM DELIGHTED TO CONVENE THIS 4TH GLOBAL ELECTION ORGANIZATION CONFERENCE.

*IFES IS DELIGHTED TO JOIN WITH ALL OF THE ORGANIZATIONS, WHO HAVE BEEN INVOLVED WITH THE GEO STEERING COMMITTEE.

*WE ARE ESPECIALLY PLEASED WITH THE THEME OF THIS YEARS CONFERENCE, "EVERY VOTE COUNTS."

*THE PURPOSE OF GEO IS TO OFFER A VENUE FOR ELECTION ADMINISTRATORS OF THE WORLD TO NETWORK, EXCHANGE INFORMATION, AND TO WORK TOGETHER FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF PROFESSIONAL ELECTION ADMINISTRATION.

*WE ARE PLEASED TO HOST THIS PRESTIGIOUS EVENT WHICH IS OCCURRING DURING THE CELEBRATION IFES' TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY.

*WE ARE HONORED TO HAVE THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR DEMOCRACY AND GLOBAL AFFAIRS, PAULA DOBRIANSKY HERE FOR THE OPENING OF OUR CONFERENCE FOR HER HELP IN ARRANGING OUR RECEPTION TOMORROW EVENING AT THE STATE DEPARTMENT.

*WE ARE DELIGHTED THAT THE CITY COUNCIL OF WASHINGTON, D.C. HAS PROCLAIMED THIS GLOBAL ELECTION WEEK IN HONOR OF THE ELECTION ADMINISTRATORS WHO ARE ASSEMBLED FOR GEO.

*I WANT TO EXPRESS DEEP APPRECIATION TO ALL OF THE PARTICIPATING GEO STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS, WHO HAVE WORKED SO HARD TO ORGANIZE THIS YEARS CONFERENCE.

*I WANT TO THANK AMBASSADOR SIMONYI FOR THE GREAT HOSPITALITY THAT HE AND THE EMBASSY STAFF SHOWED TO ALL OF US AT THE HUNGARIAN EMBASSY LAST NIGHT.

* WE ALSO GRATEFUL FOR THE GENEROUS SUPPORT THAT WE HAVE RECEIVED FOR GEO FROM THE CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (CIDA), THE VENDORS AND ALL CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS GREAT EVENT.

*TWENTY YEARS AGO, IFES BEGAN ITS MISSION WITH THE INSPIRATION AND VISION OF OUR FOUNDER, F. CLIFTON WHITE.

*OVER TWO DECADES WE HAVE TOUCHED MANY LIVES THROUGHOUT THE WORLD AND HAVE PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN HELPING PEOPLE HAVE A SAY IN HOW THEY ARE GOVERNED.

*THROUGH THE YEARS WE HAVE ADDED CIVIL SOCIETY, RULE OF LAW, AND GOVERNANCE TO OUR PORTFOLIO.

*YET WE HAVE NEVER LOST SIGHT OF THE FACT THAT ELECTIONS REMAIN AT THE HEART AND SOUL OF IFES.

*THIS IS WHY IFES EMBRACED THE CONCEPT OF GEO WHEN IT WAS FIRST INAUGURATED IN CANADA IN 1999, AND WE ARE PLEASED TO PICK UP THE BATON FROM DR. ZOLTAN TOTH AND ACEEEO WHO ORGANIZED THE LAST GEO IN HUNGARY IN 2005.

GEO IS A CELEBRATION OF ELECTION ADMINISTRATORS WORLDWIDE, WHO GUARANTEE THE INTEGRITY AND TRANSPARENCY OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS. I COMMEND ALL OF THE ELECTION ADMINISTRATORS WHO ARE JOINING US.

YOU REPRESENT THE FRONT LINE OF DEMOCRACY. WE PAY PARTICULAR TRIBUTE TO THE COURAGEOUS ELECTION ADMINISTRATORS WHO AT TIMES CARRY OUT THEIR JOBS AT GREAT PERSONAL RISK.

WE ARE HONORED TO HAVE TWO REPRESENTATIVES OF THE INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL COMMISSION OF IRAQ, DR. HINDAWI AND DR. AYAR WITH US AT GEO. THE COURAGE OF THE IECI AND THE VOTERS OF IRAQ IN RISKING DEATH TO EXERCISE THE RIGHT TO VOTE IN THE THREE ELECTIONS THAT OCCURRED IN 2005 ARE AN INSPIRATION TO US ALL.

I DO NOT BELIEVE IN PRESIDENTS FOR LIFE OF COUNTRIES, OR OF DEMOCRACY ORGANIZATIONS. ON JUNE 5TH I WILL STEP DOWN AS PRESIDENT OF IFES AFTER 19 YEARS. MY WIFE AND I WILL MOVE TO COLORADO, WHERE AFTER A SHORT BREAK I WILL CONTINUE WORKING IN THE ELECTION FIELD AS A CONSULTANT SUPPORTING YOUR WORK AND THE WORK OF IFES.

I AM GREATLY HONORED THAT THE BOARD OF IFES HAS SELECTED JEAN-PIERRE KINGSLEY, FORMER CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER OF CANADA AS MY REPLACEMENT. I KNOW THAT HE AND THE TEAM AT IFES WILL CONTINUE WORKING TO ADVANCE ELECTION ADMINISTRATION, WHILE EMBRACING THE PHILOSOPHY THERE IS NO BLUEPRINT FOR DEMOCRACY.

IT IS NOW MY PLEASURE TO PRESENT OUR OUTSTANDING PANEL OF SPEAKERS.

PAULA DOBRIANSKY

DIANE DAVIDSON, ELECTIONS CANADA

LUIS CARLOS UGALDE, IFE

ZOLTAN TOTH, ACEEEO

DENIS KADIMA, EISA

ANDREW ELLIS, IDEA

JOSE THOMSON, CAPEL

WILLIAM J. HYBL, IFES