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## Genuine democracy essential to human development, UN chief says



UNDEF-funded project in the northern Guatemala province of Alta Verapaz

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Human development is far more likely to take root if there is genuine democracy in a society, [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon said today, stressing the need for authorities everywhere to give people a greater say in their own governance.

In a [message](#) for the opening of The Doers of Democracy, a photo exhibition featuring projects assisted by the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF), Mr. Ban noted that “experience has taught us, time and again, that democracy is essential to achieving our fundamental goals of peace, human rights and development.

“We also know that neither peace nor development nor democracy can be exported or imposed from abroad,” he said in the message, which was delivered by Oscar Fernandez-Taranco, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, to the exhibition opening at UN Headquarters in New York.

“All must be underpinned by the will of the people – including and especially by a strong and active civil society.”

Created by the Secretary-General in 2005, UNDEF was established to support democratization efforts around the world. The fund’s most recent round of grants focused on projects in such

areas as community development, women's empowerment, better governance, rule of law and human rights.

Mr. Ban said UNDEF gives life to a critical principle – “that the UN does not seek to export or promote any particular national or regional model of democracy.

“It works on the understanding that the democratic ideal is rooted in philosophies and traditions from all parts of the world; that effective democratic governance enhances the quality of life for men and women everywhere; and that human development is more likely to take hold if people are given a real say in their own governance, and a chance to share in the fruits of progress.”

He emphasized that although the word ‘democracy’ does not appear once in the UN Charter, the UN does more than any other organization to develop and strengthen democratic institutions and practice around the globe.

“From supporting free and fair elections to strengthening the rule of law, from educating young people in democratic principles to helping citizens hold institutions accountable – advancing democracy is a central mission for the United Nations.”

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