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## SURVEY: CORRUPTION AND WEAK JUDICIARY ARE KEY OBSTACLES TO DEMOCRACY

NEW YORK, APRIL 6, 2004: A Freedom House study released today finds that pervasive corruption and weak judicial systems are major impediments to the development of democracy in transitional societies.

The survey, titled *Countries at the Crossroads*, is the first of its kind, providing a comparative assessment of thirty countries that are at key points in their democratic development. In each case, it provides an in-depth analysis of governmental effectiveness in creating sound policies as well as evaluating the implementation of those policies.

"The findings in this new survey underscore the urgent need for sustained policy attention and assistance to countries that are at a crucial phase in their democratic evolution. These countries are at key transition points, and to ignore their needs creates a risk of both individual backsliding and regional democratic deterioration," said Freedom House Executive Director Jennifer Windsor.

The countries examined by the survey were selected based on their significance to the future of democracy in the Middle East, the Americas, Asia, Africa, and the former Soviet Union.

Complete survey results, including a package of charts and graphs, are available online at:

<http://www.freedomhouse.org/research/crossroads/cac.htm>

The full list of countries examined is below.

Freedom House undertook this study at a time when the issue of democratic governance is assuming a more prominent and influential position in shaping the fields of international policy and development assistance.

Among the countries examined are several strategically important states that suffer from domestic instability and internal political crises, including:

- \* Pakistan, where the growing military role in government and civil life is a major obstacle to democratic reform.

- \* Uzbekistan, where gross violations of human rights and religious freedom, a weak judiciary and a lack of democratic accountability mark the rule of President Islam Karimov.

- \* Georgia, where a new government, brought to power through a peaceful "Rose Revolution," is seeking to overcome a legacy of corruption and fragmentation to set the country on a democratic course.

\* Venezuela, where the concentration of authority in the hands of President Hugo Chavez and the militarization of domestic governance are growing threats to the country's democratic freedoms.

In all four cases, and in a number of other countries assessed in the survey, rampant corruption plays a central role in undermining government legitimacy and eroding popular confidence in democracy.

Countries at the Crossroads is the product of a collaborative effort involving a team of more than 40 country experts and advisors. It provides a detailed examination of government performance in the areas of civil liberties, rule of law, anticorruption and transparency, and accountability and public voice.

The need for effective and honest governance has gained greater visibility and importance with the creation of the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), a new U.S. assistance model that recognizes that development assistance can be more effective if linked to sound policies in developing countries.

By evaluating which governments are ruling justly, Countries at the Crossroads can assist in the identification of countries that meet the basic set of eligibility requirements for the MCA and in the monitoring of state performance after recipients are chosen.

"Democratic governance is increasingly recognized as one of the key determinants of political development and economic growth," said Ms. Windsor. "This new survey is an indispensable tool for evaluating the prospects of democratic development in several important countries."

## SURVEY FINDINGS

The countries reviewed in Countries at the Crossroads are in the middle and lower range of performers on Freedom House's civil and political rights survey, Freedom in the World.

Of the total number of countries evaluated in Countries at the Crossroads, one-third are electoral democracies: i.e., they have competitive multiparty systems but they may still be grappling with weaknesses that need to be addressed before they can become well-established members of the community of liberal democratic states.

\* One group of states (East Timor, Guatemala, Indonesia, Kenya, Nepal, Nigeria, Nicaragua, Sri Lanka, Venezuela, and Yemen) has begun moving toward democratic rule in recent years, but still suffers from continued violations of civil liberties and deficits in the key areas of rule of law and corruption.

\* In the cases of Armenia, Ukraine, and Georgia (before the peaceful democratic revolution in the latter, which occurred after the period of the survey report), the limited democratic reforms that were undertaken have gradually eroded, stalled, and are in danger of complete reversal

\* Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka represent two electoral democracies whose performance has been impacted by the presence of violent insurgencies. The

survey also includes a number of monarchies that gradually and haltingly are introducing or restoring limited democratic practices-Bahrain, Qatar, and Jordan-although it is unclear exactly how far the political reforms will proceed.

\* The survey includes a number of authoritarian countries that range across the spectrum in terms of trend and magnitude of political change. Countries such as Cambodia, Haiti, Kyrgyzstan, and Morocco experienced initial limited democratic openings that have since stalled or eroded.

\* In the cases of Azerbaijan, Zimbabwe, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, and Uganda we see authoritarian systems with limited scope for political competition. Pakistan is emerging from a military coup, but promises for reform thus far have not shown results.

\* Two of the states examined in this survey are among the most politically repressive in the world: Uzbekistan and Vietnam.

"The survey is intended to help policy makers within countries to identify areas of progress as well as to highlight points of concern that need to be addressed," said Freedom House Director of Studies Christopher Walker. "For the international community, the intent of the survey is to help target diplomatic efforts and reform assistance. The narratives and scores highlight problems and successes, and separate recommendation sections prioritize the steps that should be taken to remedy deficiencies," he said.

Freedom House is a nonpartisan, U.S.-based organization that monitors the state of freedom and democracy throughout the world.

#### Countries at the Crossroads

Afghanistan  
Armenia  
Azerbaijan  
Bahrain  
Cambodia  
East Timor  
Georgia  
Guatemala  
Haiti  
Indonesia  
Jordan  
Kazakhstan  
Kenya  
Kyrgyzstan  
Malaysia  
Morocco  
Nepal  
Nicaragua  
Nigeria  
Pakistan  
Qatar  
Sierra Leone  
Sri Lanka  
Uganda  
Ukraine

Uzbekistan  
Venezuela  
Vietnam  
Yemen  
Zimbabwe