



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Akaash Maharaj calls on Arab MPs to stand up for democracy in their governments
at the United Nations International Leadership Institute talks in Jordan**

Amman, Jordan – Monday 13 March 2006

“It is no exaggeration to say that the world is at a moment of destiny. The community of nations must rally behind the democratisation of the Middle East, because the global consequences of failure in the region are simply too terrible to contemplate.”

“The United Nations International Leadership Institute’s Democratic Governance initiative represents a meaningful effort by the international community to support democratic capacity, a culture of democracy, and a framework of democratic institutions, in a region where the democratic deficit imperils the entire world,” said Akaash Maharaj at the conclusion of the first day of talks. “I am optimistic about our prospects, though I have no illusions about the challenges we face.”

The UN ILI is bringing together elected MPs from across the Arab world, in a set of structured talks to help them grow their countries into true democracies. The talks also involve legislators and democratic leaders from western countries.

“Arab governments have an opportunity to create peace, security, and prosperity in the Middle East and around the globe, but only if they meet the challenge of enshrining democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights into their political structures and practices,” said Maharaj. “It is no exaggeration to say that the world is at a moment of destiny. The community of nations must rally behind the democratisation of the Middle East, because the global consequences of failure in the region are simply too terrible to contemplate.”

Maharaj was invited to participate in the talks in his capacity as President and CEO of the Concordis Foundation. His focus is on: freedom of expression and equality of citizens; the development of strategies for the diplomatic resolution of international conflicts; and peaceful co-existence between Israelis and Palestinians.

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www.maharaj.org/journalists.shtml

Editors' Notes

- The Democratic Governance initiative is being held under the authority of the United Nations International Leadership Institute, part of the United Nations University system.
 - United Nations: www.un.org
 - International Leadership Institute: www.la.unu.edu
 - United Nations University: www.unu.edu

- Participants from the following Arab states and governments are at the talks:
 - Algeria
 - Angola
 - Bahrain
 - Iraq
 - Jordan
 - Kuwait
 - Morocco
 - Pakistan
 - Palestinian Authority
 - Saudi Arabia
 - Senegal
 - Uzbekistan
 - Yemen

- Legislators and democratic leaders from the following non-Arab countries are in attendance supporting the talks
 - Canada
 - Germany
 - Norway
 - United States

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