4 CONCLUSIONS

The Community of Democracies is not a political alliance, but its member states are joined by a shared hope for further progress toward democracy in the world. They support the efforts of civil society to create a virtual international community of democrats.

The working ground rules for the *Handbook's* construction held that there are no hard and fast prescriptions for democracy transformation, apart from the fact that the process and its outcomes best emerge peacefully from civil society itself. But active democrats and human rights defenders expect, and benefit from, the encouragement and support of democrats everywhere.

Democracy development is a function of process and sound institutions, but also very much one of behaviour, which cannot just be transferred as technique. It requires time, patience and hard application. Outside support needs to be sustained over time. The most critical resources are those of human capital in the countries concerned. Civil society forms the building blocks of democratization.

The *Handbook* aims to explain how democratic governments have used their embassies, consulates and diplomatic officers to provide such encouragement and support in the past. Each situation is different, and there is a varying mix of factors involved for each of the members of the Community of Democracies in policy emphasis and deployment of personnel.

International relations today form a complex of networks, contacts, transactions and activity that is mostly outside the scope of governments. The importance of international civil society in this process is primordial, amplified by the ongoing revolution in global communications.

The *Handbook* underlines the extent to which diplomatic representation has itself been undergoing transformation, from being an enterprise consisting of private government-to-government transactions to one in which people-to-people and public diplomacy are central features of the professional skill sets required today.

Of course, the skills involved are used in differing mixtures, depending on whether the host country is a failed, failing or post-conflict state, a military or theocratic dictatorship, a regime of populist authoritarianism, a fledgling and fragile democracy, or a complex democracy trying to consolidate democratic institutions and purposes. In citing examples from the last decades, we avoid slotting host countries into one category or another. The Community of Democracies' member states wish to avoid attempts to judge member countries according to snapshots of their governance. Independent NGOs already analyze relative governance very effectively.

Instead, a number of country case studies are presented, attempting to show a wide variety of situations and challenges. Some of the narratives, such as Chile, South Africa, Poland or Ukraine, are in the past tense — which is obviously not to suggest that history is over for the countries concerned. Other narratives are very much in the here and now. Those case studies that were in the *Handbook's* first edition, such as Belarus, Burma/Myanmar and Zimbabwe, and those presented for the second edition on China, Cuba and Egypt have all been updated in this third edition. The new edition also includes new case studies on the Tunisian Revolution and on Russian democracy, 1987–2013.

The next phases of all these studies remain to be written by the people themselves.

In these case studies, and in such instructive episodes of transition as Sierra Leone and Tanzania, which are available online, we expect that practitioners in the field — whether diplomats, NGOs or other personnel — will recognize elements familiar to the situation they are closest to at present, and will be assisted in developing their own approaches and programs for democracy development support on the ground.

In the years to come, we shall continue to update the existing case studies, and add new ones as they arise. We constantly modify and expand the *Handbook* itself to take account of comments from readers and users and hope that the *Handbook* serves the helpful concrete purposes intended — the higher interest of promoting both greater satisfaction for the aspirations of many millions of individuals, and a more secure and open international environment for all.