



# CODE '11 | Budapest Conference on Democracy and Human Rights

Organized by the International Centre for Democratic Transition and the Tom Lantos Institute

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## The International Centre for Democratic Transition

The International Centre for Democratic Transition (ICDT) is a non-profit organization based in Budapest, Hungary, which collects the experiences of recent democratic transitions and shares them with those who are determined to follow that same path. Instead of promoting democracy in general, the ICDT sets more concrete and pragmatic goals. The Centre strives to show how dozens of young democracies have made, and are making, the transition, so that those who set off on this difficult journey from dictatorship to democracy in the future may learn from the successes as well as from the failures.

The idea to establish an institute to collect and share the experiences of past democratic transitions originated from former US Ambassador Mark Palmer. The idea was presented by the Hungarian Foreign Minister at the Third Ministerial Conference of the Community of Democracies in Santiago de Chile. The idea was well received and endorsed by the participating Foreign Ministers, representing more than 100 democratic governments of the world. Finally, in September 2005, the Hungarian president announced at the World Summit of the United Nations that “an International Centre for Democratic Transition (ICDT) has been set up in Budapest.”

The ICDT’s mission is to facilitate the smooth and peaceful process of democratic transition on the basis of participatory principles; the political, economic, legal, cultural, and civil societal aspects of transformation; and the socio-cultural context of regions and countries where the process takes place. The ICDT currently focuses on four different program areas: promoting interregional cooperation between governments and civil societies of neighboring countries to enable democratic transition, providing assistance and learning opportunities to new and fragile democracies, concentrating on particular and practical elements of democracy such as elections and freedom of speech, strengthening the involvement of marginalized groups such as minorities, women and other unprotected social groups in both the transition process and the functioning of democracy, and providing analysis of the complex process of democratic transition in order to forecast future trends and give recommendations for projects in the Centre’s three other program areas.

Because the International Centre for Democratic Transition was founded in Central Europe, we are acutely aware of the complexity of democratic transition as a process. We ourselves have recently undergone this process and know full well the fragility of new democracies. In an international environment filled with daunting challenges and serious obstacles that could impede the spread of democracy, the International Center for Democratic Transition is a leading organization on the difficult issue of democratic transition. Combining hard-won exceptional practical knowledge with an unyielding commitment to the process of transition, the ICDT stands by the side of those who seek to bring democracy’s benefits to their own people and provides the skills to do so effectively.

