

RELEASE IN FULL

---

**From:** Mills, Cheryl D <MillsCD@state.gov>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 8, 2011 7:22 AM  
**To:** H  
**Subject:** Civil Societ Dialogue

Tomica has points for you to flag for folks at the 9:15 A/S meeting regarding the launch of the civil society dialogue next week (16 Feb).

This is the background memo for your fyi.

## STRATEGIC DIALOGUE WITH CIVIL SOCIETY

### OVERVIEW

The State Department and USAID dedicate significant energy and resources to work with and on behalf of civil society. However, the initiatives that support this effort are widely dispersed throughout the bureaucracy. As a result, it has been difficult to build a narrative around the United States' support for civil society. And while the Secretary meets with civil society leaders as part of her regular travel, there is currently no mechanism for channeling her engagement back into the Department's policy deliberations. A Strategic Dialogue with Civil Society will help address these issues and provide greater cohesion, coordination, and consistent branding across the Department's work with civil society. The Strategic Dialogue will parallel analogous initiatives with bilateral partners and elevate our work with civil society alongside government-to-government relationships. It will also provide a framework for capturing more value from U.S. engagement with civil society and offer a platform for calling on other states to pursue similar initiatives.

### COMPONENTS

We anticipate that the Strategic Dialogue with Civil Society will run for 18 months. It will be built around three primary components:

1. Launch Event – The Secretary will launch the Dialogue on the morning of February 16, 2011. The opening session will bring together a broad cross section of representatives from global civil society to focus on the challenge of defending civil society. The launch event will provide an opportunity for the Secretary to build on the themes from her Krakow speech and President Obama's UNGA address and situate the Dialogue within our broader diplomatic efforts to engage partners beyond the state. It will also provide a forum for soliciting ideas on the structure and agenda of the Dialogue.
2. Working Groups – Department officials will conduct dialogues with small groups of global civil society leaders and a bipartisan group of Congressional Members and staff. Three initial working groups will focus on Democracy and Human Rights; Governance and Accountability (anti-corruption); and Empowering Women. Over the course of the Dialogue, the Secretary may suggest that participants form additional working groups on topics such as religion in global affairs, the environment, development, global health, and refugee protection. Working group chairs would also have the discretion to create sub-groups (e.g. task forces) to broaden the range of civil society participants. Once they have been invited to participate, civil society participants in each working group will meet, either virtually or in

person, to select a leader, develop an agenda, identify areas of potential cooperation with each other and the U.S. government, and propose ideas for action. Working group chairs will receive a template with guidance, expectations, and recommended activities. It is anticipated that each working group will produce at least one concrete deliverable that will be developed in partnership with civil society.

3. **International Sessions** – The Secretary will chair periodic sessions of the Strategic Dialogue as part of her regular travel. Each session will focus on an issue being pursued by a Strategic Dialogue working group that is relevant in the region where she is traveling. Each working group would be asked to submit a memo detailing their progress and planned activities in advance of the Vilnius Ministerial Meeting of the Community of Democracies on June 30. As part of the Secretary's participation in the Vilnius ministerial she would announce commitments from likeminded governments to launch their own dialogues with civil society and encourage other countries to emulate this example.

### **ADMINISTRATION AND LOGISTICS**

Chairs will have primary responsibility for managing their working groups. Within the Department, DRL will be the primary point of contact. ECA and IIP will assist with logistics and communications. The Senior Advisor for Civil Society and Emerging Democracies will help guide the Secretary's involvement in the initiative.