Development co-operation can support the aspirations and trends towards greater democracy which have now acquired momentum world-wide. This was underlined by participants in a DAC Seminar in Paris (21st-22nd November 1994).

To encourage the development of aid policies along these lines, by sharing lessons of experience and seeking "best practices", the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD has established a Working Group on Participatory Development and Good Governance. The Seminar formed part of the second meeting of this Group, chaired by Dr. Klemens van de Sand, the Deputy Director General in charge of planning and human rights in the German Federal Ministry of Economic Co-operation and Development.

Participants in the Seminar included Belisario Betancur, the former president of Colombia, and Mooen Qureshi, former Prime Minister of Pakistan and Senior Vice-President of the World Bank, as well as personalities from El Salvador, Kenya, Zambia and the Philippines. The DAC’s "Orientations for Participatory Development and Good Governance" [OECD/GD(93)191] provided the framework for the discussion. These Orientations embody DAC Members’ common perceptions on issues ranging from the political dimensions of greater participation, the accountability of elected officials, the development of local self-government, an independent judicial system and respect for human rights.

Participants from developing countries at the Seminar emphasised their agreement with these orientations which can provide a broadly accepted basis in the often heated dialogue on good governance.

The experts expressed a highly positive view, based on their own experiences, of the practical and moral support which donors can provide to national efforts towards democratisation and greater respect for human rights.
However, donors really need to address some issues:

-- donors should take a long-term view of their involvement in the "political" development of partner developing countries: democratic values and practices take time to be firmly established, and civil society needs to be nurtured. Their efforts must be based around broadly-based endogenous "projects for change" which respond to specific national challenges such as ethnic and social divisions. A precious role in this respect can be played by non-governmental organisations both of the OECD and the developing countries.

-- aid procedures need reforming. Inadequate flexibility and timeliness may prevent aid from contributing when and where it is crucially needed, especially in post-conflict situations (e.g., demining, demobilisation, retraining of the police and military). According to Ms Mirna Liévano de Marques, a former Minister of Planning in El Salvador, there are serious shortcomings in the follow-up to donor pledges.

-- closer donor co-ordination is indispensable for greater effectiveness in promoting Participatory Development and Good Governance. The Seminar looked at experience with aid co-ordination mechanisms, especially the World-Bank-chaired Consultative Groups, where political developments are increasingly discussed as integral to the development agenda. Participants underlined the need for timely and transparent preparation of issues of participatory development and good governance and a close follow-up after the CG meetings. They also stressed the importance to strengthen and broaden the ownership of mutually agreed reform programmes by involving the civil society in the respective countries.

The Seminar welcomed a suggestion by the Chair to establish a dialogue between former negotiators in the El Salvador peace process and actors in the current consolidation of peace in Mozambique and Angola.