

## PREFACE

The Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung has been publishing the KAS Democracy Report every year since 2005. Each report presents information about the level of development attained in the foundation's project countries in key areas of democracy. Following after *Media and Democracy* (2005) and *Rule of Law* (2006), the publication of *Parties and Democracy* (2007) marked the successful completion of the first cycle. The Report of 2008 once again addressed the subject of "Media and Democracy". This year's Democracy Report, in turn, concentrates on political parties, their patterns of organisation, and their contribution towards the consolidation of democracy as well as on party system structures and current development tendencies in 16 selected KAS project countries.

Political parties are to be found at the centre of almost all political systems. They play a particularly indispensable part in the development and consolidation of pluralist democracies. In democratic systems, political parties act as bridges between civil society and the institutions of the state. They formulate political objectives and provide citizens with opportunities to become actively involved in decision-making processes. As a general rule, they nominate candidates for public offices, participate in elections, and place their representatives in key positions of the political system if they are successful.

For more than 40 years, the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung has been committed to promoting democracy as well as its values, processes, and institutions all over the world. There is general agreement among German as well as international organisations of (political) development cooperation that economic and social development is mutually interlinked with the realisation of democracy. Democracy and democratic players and institutions, such as parties, fair and free elections, or a functional parliament constitute framework conditions that are of great importance for the sustainability of development. Being a political foundation, we believe that promoting democracy is synonymous with value-oriented party promotion. Cooperating with and promoting democratic parties plays an outstanding part in our international work. In our understanding of politics, it is a fundamental maxim that fair representation of social interests, active participation by citizens in the societal processes of decision- and policy-making, and responsible political leadership can be attained only through party diversity, free and fair elections, and democratic competition among political parties.

Although the articles in this volume do not constitute the only sources of information available to the KAS, the Report's national analyses assist us in planning and modifying our activities in the field of international party cooperation and promotion. I should like to take this opportunity to express my cordial gratitude to the authors of the national studies. I should also like to thank Professor Karl-Rudolf Korte and the members of his research group at Duisburg-Essen University for their well-researched evaluation of the various national studies, and Shereen Karmali and Alex Free for copy-editing, as usual, with great commitment and care. Finally, thanks are due to the foundation's representatives abroad for their contribution to the national studies as well as to the editors of this volume at the KAS head office.

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