

December 20, 2006 **JoongAng Daily**
English JoongAng Ilbo - IHT Partner

German foundation helps democracy bloom

December 19, 2006 — The general consensus among political foundations in Germany is that political education is their most important task. So wrote Karsten Grabow last week in an e-mail to the JoongAng Daily. Mr. Grabow, who will be in Seoul today to participate in a symposium on the development of Korean politics, is a former senior lecturer on social science at Humboldt University and is now project coordinator for the international cooperation department within Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung.

“Democracy needs democrats and the education of democrats in Germany and abroad should stand at the center of all the activities of political foundations,” Mr. Grabow wrote.

The symposium that Mr. Grabow will attend was organized by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung office in Korea and will be held this afternoon at the Daewoo Center.

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung’s Korean office was first set up 28 years ago. Since its establishment, the office has provided a range of political education in the form of lectures and seminars.

Mr. Grabow stressed that political foundations are think-tanks that contribute to policy solutions based on economic, political and social research.

These solutions, the German political expert said, have the capacity to ease problems over the long-term.

“What can be seen as helpful is early democratic education at schools and other educational establishments. This falls also within the competency of political foundations,” Mr. Grabow wrote.

“According to Winston Churchill, democracy is the most difficult form of political rule. Continuous education in democracy seems to be a necessary but not a sufficient condition for overall acceptance of democracy. Its legitimacy and acceptance requires economic growth and a socially balanced distribution of wealth in the form of fair chances for participation in business and politics.”

Mr. Grabow said the main resource of political foundations is the expertise of its staff, which Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung has had in Korea for a long time, making it an ideal foundation. “Their work is based not only on special country knowledge but also on established networks with partner organizations,” he wrote.

Mr. Grabow says the second important resource is access to politicians. “We are a kind of gate keeper who helps to make contacts especially for parliamentarians and decision makers in young democracies. These contacts are as important for learning as they are for the building of international networks.”